



Monna
Lisa
or
The
Quest
of the

University of
Southern
Library



Scala

J.A. DUKLAUER

40

~~59~~

J. A. DUKLAUER

MONNA LISA; OR, THE QUEST
OF THE WOMAN SOUL



MONNA LISA

OR

THE QUEST OF THE WOMAN SOUL

TRANSCRIBED BY

GUGLIELMO SCALA

ENDICOTT,
Stationery and Novelty Shop,
A. ZLINKOFF
442 Columbus Ave. New York
LADIES' HOME JOURNAL PATTERNS.

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

COPYRIGHT, 1911,
BY THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

Published September, 1911.

PREFACE

THE original of the following translation was a dilapidated manuscript discovered in a heap of rubbish in one of the old palaces of Florence which was undergoing alterations. This manuscript was undoubtedly one of the lost works of the great artist Leonardo da Vinci. The chirography was certainly his, written backward with the left hand, from right to left, and requiring the use of a mirror to decipher it. There was also his characteristic spelling, together with his peculiar fashion of often running two or three words into one to suit his convenience or the whim of the moment. Besides, many passages were of similar import to others which have been made known through the facsimile reproductions of Leonardo's writings, and from which it has been shown that it was a common habit of the artist to write out over and over in different phraseology those thoughts that seemed to have especially pleased him. Fi-

nally, on the inside of the cover—which was of gray cardboard and decorated by Da Vinci's favorite design of twisted cords and knots—was the following inscription, written in the delicate handwriting of the eighteenth century:—

“1753, 5 Marzo—This *codicetto* (little manuscript) of Leonardo da Vinci belonged formerly to the Signore Don Giambattista Salucci, *cavaliere* of Milan, but living in Florence, and I, Gaetano Caccia, of Novara, bought it from the said *cavaliere* for twenty *gigliati*.”

The task of deciphering and translating this manuscript was of varying difficulty; for, though the first part was in a state of excellent preservation, the middle of the book was considerably torn and gnawed, probably by mice, and much of the concluding pages rendered illegible by mould. Where only a few words were missing, which could be readily inferred from the context, these have been supplied; in defective passages which were paralleled by others in the facsimile publications, the work of such learned decipherers of the master's handwriting as Richter, Ravaisson-Molliou, and Uzielli was of great assist-

ance; still, there were many portions where it was thought best to make no attempt at restoration, but to leave the reader to supply from his own imagination what was wanting.

It should be stated, however, that in arranging the translation for publication, the solid matter of the original has been divided into paragraphs, chapters, and books; quotation marks have been supplied; and many a now superfluous *dissi* (said I) and *disse* (said he or she) have been omitted. Also, as the *codicetto* had neither title nor sub-titles, those which now appear have been inferred from the narrative.

Shortly after the translation was completed the original manuscript was unfortunately destroyed by an accident, so that the following pages contain all that survives of what was probably the last writing of the great master of the Renaissance.

GUGLIELMO SCALA.

CONTENTS

BOOK I — SALAI

	PAGE
PROEMIO	3
I. THE WOMAN SOUL	7
II. THE FAVORITE PUPIL	14
III. IN THE CHURCH	20
IV. A GREAT LADY	24
V. A YOUNG GALEOTTO	32
VI. THE CONTRACT	42
VII. THE FIRST SITTINGS	46

BOOK II — LEONARDO

I. THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS	59
II. THE ZINGARA	66
III. IN THE STUDIO	75
IV. THE TELESCOPE	100
V. A WOMAN'S SYMPATHY	104

BOOK III — LISA

I. YOUTHFUL PASSION	113
II. A DIFFICULTY	124
III. THE CAVERN	129

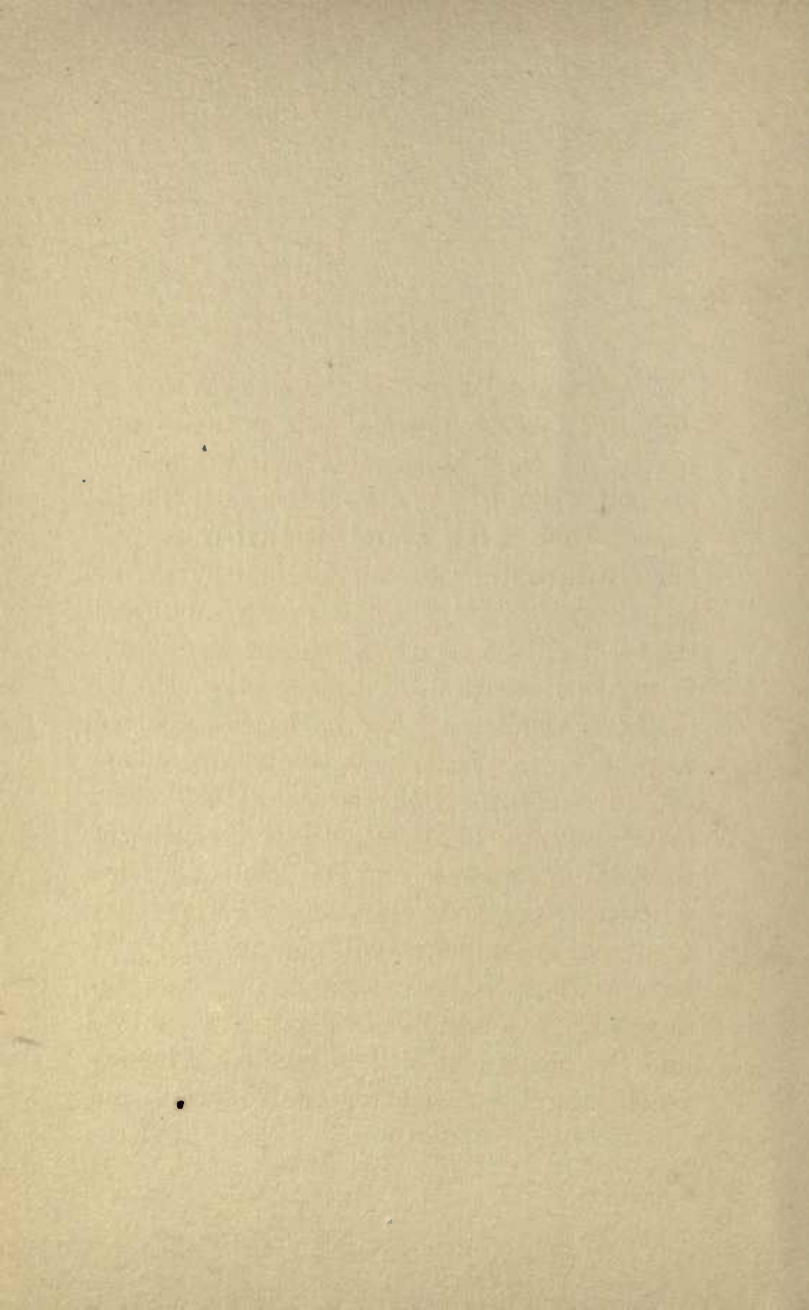
CONTENTS

	PAGE
IV. THE FLESH OF WOMAN	133
V. THE BANQUET	137
VI. THE LETTERS	141
VII. AT THE VILLA	159
VIII. IN THE LOGGIA	167
IX. DARKNESS AND FLIGHT	173
X. A SPIRIT IN PRISON	178
XI. THE DAGGER	184
XII. FRANCESCO'S STORY	188
XIII. THE BIRTH OF A SOUL	193
XIV. THE PORTRAIT	199
XV. CONCLUSION	201

MONNA LISA; OR, THE QUEST OF THE WOMAN SOUL

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

To avoid any misconception on the part of readers of this romance of "Monna Lisa," the publishers would explain that the work is one of pure fiction. "Guglielmo Scala" is the pen name adopted by an American literary worker who has devoted long study to Italian art and literature and who takes this method of sharing with the public the web of imagination woven for his own pleasure about Da Vinci and the subject of his famous portrait.

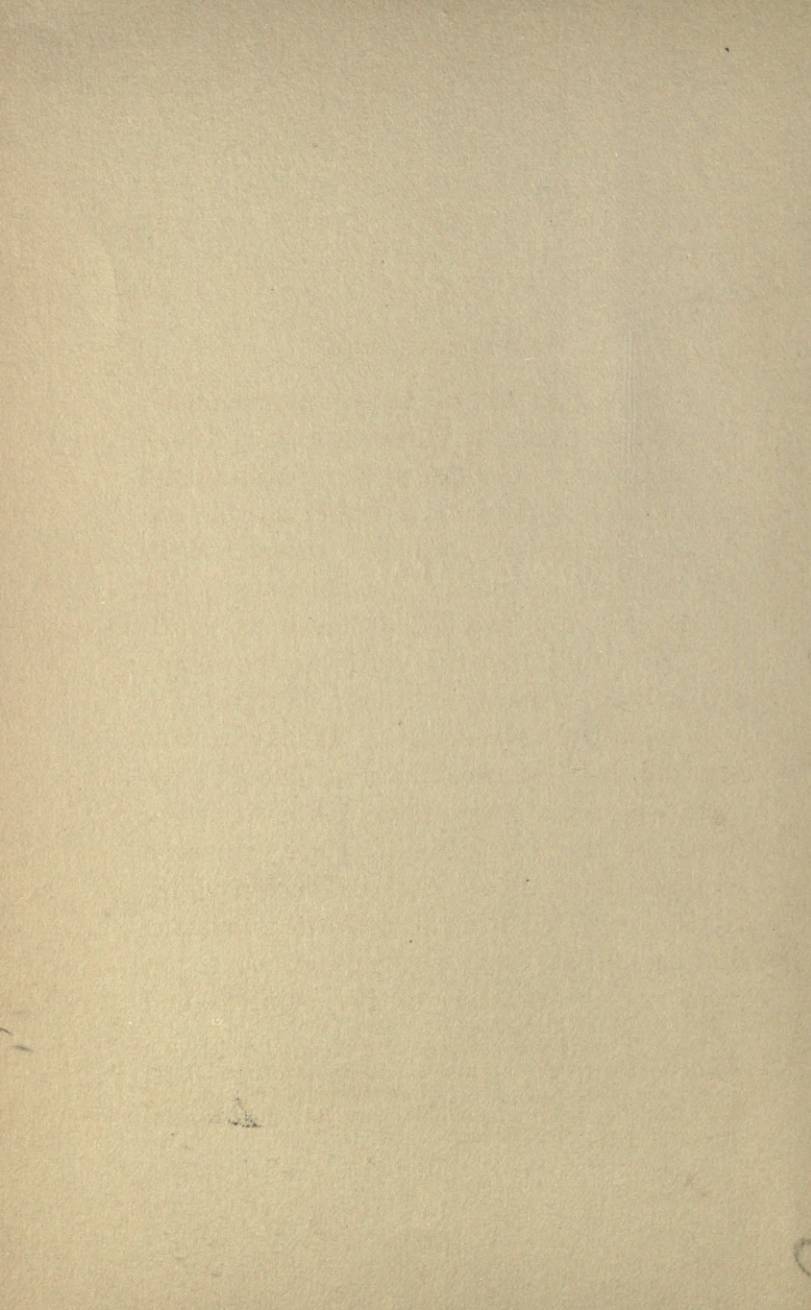


PROEMIO

I, LEONARDO VINCIO, on the seventh day of July, 1518, being now sixty-six years of age, having my right hand paralyzed and incapable of using the brush to fix in colors the visions of my imagination, but having my left hand still useful and capable of moving the pen to record the thoughts of my mind and the recollections of my experience, and living in my manor-house of Gloux—given me by the Most Christian King, have here resolved to write in this little book the history of my life in Florence from the year 1503. The matter of some of these pages will consist of records of events and of conversations, written by me at or near the time when they occurred, other pages will contain copies of letters which passed between me and Madonna Lisa Gioconda—God rest her soul!—and the remainder will be made up by my recollections, which after twelve years and

more are still fresh in my mind. In what I shall write my sole endeavor will be to tell the truth as far as is in my power.

BOOK I—SALAI



I

THE WOMAN SOUL

IN the early days of my young manhood, when I was living in Florence with my master Verrocchio—working at both painting and sculpture, and beginning experiments and studies concerning *artificiosa natura*,¹ there was one subject which I did not pursue, but on the contrary avoided as much as possible. And that was the study of the minds and souls of women, or rather of those who were beautiful or seductive. It may be that I feared their influence upon me should I become too intimate with them, too absorbed in them; for very early I had become convinced that he who does not control his sensuality becomes unfitted for giving form to visions that should last for eternity; and, moreover, from my observations of the painters and

¹ There is no exact equivalent in English which will translate this phrase so common in the writings of Da Vinci. He means by it "Nature as artificer," working under definite and unchangeable laws laid down by the "Créator" or "Prime Mover."

sculptors among whom I lived, I saw that those who made themselves the companions of loose women, nay even those who espoused good women, though they sometimes acquired great prosperity in the things of this world, yet, because they did not fully possess themselves, failed to manifest in its plenitude their inborn *virtù*.¹ For the true painter should be a solitary man, especially when he is intent upon his meditations. Since, if he is alone he is all his own, and if he is accompanied by only one companion he will be just half his own, and so much the less will he be his own the more he multiplies his indiscretion.

Therefore, being fully persuaded of this, if at any time when I was a young man I perceived that the thoughts of some beautiful or seductive woman pursued me when absent from her presence and came between me and my meditations on my art or science, I withdrew altogether from her company, lest she

¹ There is no word or phrase in English except of the time of Chaucer that expresses what *virtù* meant to the Italian of the Renaissance. It connotes force, capability, talent, courage and the like, rather than mere moral rectitude. It is similar to the Latin *virtus*. Machiavelli could speak appropriately of the *virtù* of such a moral monster as Cesare Borgia.

might hinder me in the work for which the Creator had fashioned me—namely, to make of myself as it were a mirror that could transmute itself into the forms and colors of whatever thing it might have for an object. For that reason it would not be well to let any foreign influence come between me and what I should reflect in the truth of my art.

By this practice I so accustomed myself to live for my art and my science, that finally I could mingle and hold converse with women and could study and paint their faces and bodies, and no distracting thoughts would follow me to prevent my meditation upon the works of art which I planned or upon the laws of nature which I was discovering by experiment. Moreover, when I was an engineer in the service of the Diodario of Syria, after my first departure from Florence, I often heard the Mahometans say that women had no souls, and sometimes when I was among them I was even inclined to agree with them—so different from the operations of the divine reason of man were the workings of women's minds. But when I returned to my own land and saw the people paying great honor and worship to a woman because she was the Mother of God,

when I saw how much less barbarous these people were because they so honored her and all women in her, when I recalled what great things had been achieved by Christian women, how many noble saints and martyrs had come from among them to glorify God, how Beatrice Portinari had been the inspiration of our divine Dante, how the sainted Catherine of Sienna had been the only one able to bring back the Most High Pontiff from the Babylonish Captivity at Avignon, and when I remembered also that women are the mothers of men, I knew that they must be possessed of a soul, however different it might be from the wondrous soul of man. Just as the bodies of women are like unto those of men in that nearly all the members are similar, and yet they differ marvellously in both perfections and imperfections, so must it be with the woman soul—alike and yet unlike to that of man. And I thought that if I were able to discover in just what things that difference consists, then I should of a truth know all of the woman soul that can be known by any male being.

So with this thought, when I first entered the service of Ludovico il Moro at Milan, hav-

ing no longer any fear of sensual desire, I mingled again in the society of women. I had at that time much opportunity of conversing with those of all kinds and degrees—the noble and well-instructed ladies of the court, the light and brilliant women of the town, the sedate and virtuous wives of the burghers, the simple and often honest helpmates of the laborers and peasants, the old and the young, the ugly and the beautiful, the ordinary and the exceptional. I drew and painted their faces and figures and observed carefully their words and actions. But though at first I seemed to make some progress in the discovery of what the woman soul might be, yet soon was I baffled in every case by the cloud of deceit and falsehood that each woman cast about her, when she perceived that I wished to learn what she really was in herself.

Now I know well that there is much of falsehood in man also; but it is certain that while he may use falsehood to accomplish his purposes, not only the base but also the good—as when holy friars deceive the stupid people in order to lead them to God—yet, with a few exceptions, man, in his inmost heart, loves and desires the truth for himself, even when he

denies it to others. But woman, as I then thought, seemed to love falsehood for itself, to delight in it, and to clothe herself in it. Moreover, with man, falsehood seemed like the shadows of daytime, which, while concealing some things, render others more evident by showing them in relief; but with women falsehood seemed like the shadows of night, distorting, obscuring, and hiding everything—only here and there pierced by small and dim lights, and those in truth artificial and misleading. It may be that woman like other weak animals strives to protect herself from man by seeking the shadows of falsehood and guile—I know not; yet it is certain that I did not find in those days any woman who, when she discovered that some one was desirous of knowing all that was in her soul, would not immediately shroud herself in deceit and so baffle all further knowledge.

Yet, in spite of this, I was able to discover a few facts; namely, that woman, being weak, loves power—especially over those who are stronger than she—and often acquires great influence over man by a subtle knowledge of his weaknesses, particularly of those weaknesses which are due to his animal nature;

and also that because of her love of falsehood woman has no sense of justice, which is truth made manifest in thought, nor of friendship, which is truth made manifest in action. But of these and of other similar matters I shall not write further because they are clearly and wittily set forth in the book entitled *Il Manganello*, which I was much given to reading at that time.

Nevertheless I remained certain that there was something in woman behind these faults and shortcomings, an elusive something¹ I had not yet known, but the effects of which I had seen in the ineffable smile that at times glorifies the face of woman, and which I had often endeavored to paint upon the features of saints and madonnas. In that elusive something I felt must be the cause that made the woman soul a different thing from the soul of man. And I was certain that if I could know what it was I should love it, and that it was because I had not been able to obtain any sure knowledge of the woman soul that I had completed a half-century of life without having ever loved a woman.

¹ "*Un non so che*" in the original,

II

THE FAVORITE PUPIL

SUCH were my opinions of women, when, in 1503, I once more enrolled myself in the guild of the painters of Florence, and, after four years of wandering, decided to make that city my home for the remainder of my life. Among the servants and pupils then living with me were Giacomo, whom I had cured of his thievish tricks and had made a faithful servant, Galeazzo, Gian Antonio, Tommaso, Julio Tedesco, and Andrea Salai. Of all these I loved Salai the most. He had come to me eight years before at Milan, his father being a Hungarian soldier, his mother a Neapolitan woman. At that time he was but a child, yet full of bodily grace and beauty, and with a heart overflowing with affection toward me, his master. He loved beautiful raiment, which was but fitting and proper in his case, and it pleased me also to attire him in the very best, albeit he was

most beautiful when unclothed. Yet he, though he loved me much, would sometimes pilfer from me a few *soldi* from the sums received in change; but perforce I always forgave him, for he was so beautiful in his penitence that it was impossible to harden my heart against him. And I must say that on every occasion when I entrusted him with large sums he was always most accurate and faithful.

Now at this time he was in the full bloom of his youth. I knew well the many temptations that beset him, for I could not prevent light women from seeing that he was beautiful. I also knew that frequently he yielded. Yet in the matter of sensual love the young merit more compassion than blame, while the old merit more blame than compassion. Therefore, while I refrained from being harsh with him, and so driving him away from me, yet I did all in my power to show him that if he did not curb his sensuality he might as well walk on all fours, and also that the chief remedy for such fevers was greater application to his work as a painter. For indeed by this time he had learned to paint excellently, though the chief fault in

his work was that it was too much an imitation of me, his master.

Again, in order also to draw him away from light women, I would often speak to him of the woman soul, and how all the love of the body is but as the dark soil out of which springs into the free air of heaven the perfect flower, the love of the soul, the love of celestial harmony and beauty. And I showed him how I was endeavoring to express some part of that celestial beauty and harmony in the faces of the Holy Virgin and of her mother, the blessed St. Anne, on the cartoon of which picture I was at this time working.

In this talk of the woman soul, Salai grew greatly interested, for his was truly a beautiful, though—alas!—not a great soul. And he too endeavored to see traces of this soul on the faces of women, and also endeavored to reproduce it with his brush. Moreover, as he advanced in thought and feeling, he became less subject to feminine temptation, and more expert in his art, and more did he draw my heart unto him, until the confidence that existed between us was not like that be-

tween master and pupil, but rather that between a father and a dearly loved son.

One day he came running to me in great excitement and exclaimed:

“Master! Master! I have seen it! I have seen it, and it is perfection.”

“What is it that is perfection?” I asked.

“O Master!” he replied, “it is the woman soul. I have seen it in the face of a great lady as she came out of the Church of Santa Maria Novella. She smiled on me, and she is the woman soul for whom you have been seeking these many years.”

Then I said laughing: “You have allowed yourself to be carried away by your youthful imagination, to which every beautiful woman is a saint, an angel, a goddess, though in truth she may be the most malignant of devils.”

“No, no, Master!” he cried. “I know that I am not misled. I have seen many a woman with as beautiful features, as radiant color, as perfect a figure; but never have I seen on any face the look, the smile, that I saw on hers. Oh! it far surpasses that wonderful smile of your Saint Anne. I tell you

it is the woman soul, and you—you—the only one in the world who can paint it—must come and see.”

“But, Drea, can Leonardo, the famous painter, whose hair is already turning gray, can he loiter about a church door like a young fop to see a pretty woman come from her devotions, and wait for a passing smile?”

Then Salai became impatient, nay, almost angry with me, and exclaimed: “You *must* be growing old, Master, since you refuse the opportunity of seeing what all your life you have longed to see—and it is so little trouble. The church is not very far—she goes there to mass every Sunday—often in the week to pray—I have found this out from a beggar woman who sits by the door. To-morrow is Sunday—should not Leonardo sometimes hear mass? You need not wait about for her. I will find her and take you where you can see her and not be observed. It is but a little thing to do; yet a great thing to see.”

But I replied sadly: “If I were of your years, Drea, I should, like you, be wild with anticipation, for I see your wits have been

completely overthrown because a great lady has perchance smiled on you; but I have seen too many women, too many great ladies—”

Here he interrupted me, pouring forth a rhapsody upon the lady, and concluding with, “Master, I ask but one thing. It needs but one look. You will give it, and, if I am wrong, never love your Drea any more, but send me away as a liar and deceiver.”

And so insistent was he that I was forced to agree to attend mass with him the following morning.

III

IN THE CHURCH

THE next morning I was aroused by Salai, who assisted me to dress, attiring me in my best tunic and cloak, and, as it were, led me to the aforesaid church a little before the time for mass. There he lingered at the door, as the beggar woman told him that the lady was not yet come, and I proceeded into the church.

After looking for a time at the admirable fresco near the entrance by Maso, the Florentine, who brought back our painters to the study of Nature, I walked down the nave. There I admired the ingenious artifice of Fra Sisto and Fra Ristori, who had known so well how to make use of the laws of perspective to increase the apparent size of the Church, and, coming to the chapel of Filippino Strozzi, I examined very carefully the frescoes of my friend, Filippino Lippi, being particularly pleased by his having rep-

resented things to the best of his ability in accordance with the truth of Nature. Thence, passing by the high altar, where the acolytes were beginning to light the candles, I came to the steps that lead up to the Strozzi chapel, whose walls are defaced by the futile labor of the degenerate imitators of the great master, Giotto.

At that place I stopped suddenly, for before me was a lady, attired in black, kneeling near the door of the Sepolcreto, and telling her beads. There was in her upturned face something that brought before me a vision of Our Lady at the foot of the cross. So absorbed in her devotions was she, that she did not notice me as I stood there gazing at her, half inclined to kneel down, and at her side to worship the Supreme Author of our being. A moment later I felt someone twitch my cloak, and turning saw Salai, who had been searching for me, and who, much excited, whispered:

“She has entered the church!” Then, seeing the kneeling woman, he added hastily, “Hush! there she is! Was I not right, Master?”

Just then the lady, either because she had

finished telling her rosary, or because she had been disturbed by Salai's voice, arose, and seeing us gazing at her, went to join the worshippers before the altar, giving us in passing a frank and free glance, such as noble ladies are wont to use when they see the admiration they awaken.

I walked back to the door, intending to go to my house; but the face of the lady prevented me from leaving the church. I lingered near the entrance, angry with Salai for having brought me thither, and angry with myself for not being able to go out into the bright sunlight, and, under the clear blue of the sky, drive away that face which held me there. Such a thing had not happened to me since I had departed for Syria. It was not possible that I, Leonardo, who had counted fifty years, who had observed and studied *artificiosa natura* and mankind so much, should be so moved by the face of a woman—unless, perhaps, it might be some manifestation of the woman soul that I had seen there.

Salai, perceiving how greatly I was disturbed in mind, wisely remained silent, gazing up the nave to where he could see the

dark clad figure kneeling among the worshippers. The mass seemed very long and the tedious intoning of the officiant well-nigh intolerable. At last when, the service being ended, the worshippers began to disperse, Salai stationed himself by the door, and as the lady came near, presented her with the holy water. She smiled her thanks, giving me also a passing glance as she went by—Salai after her. I, indeed, tried to detain him, but he shook himself free, and followed her into the sunlight.

For some time I remained in the dim and deserted church, questioning myself as to whether Salai were right or not, and if in this lady's smile were really the woman soul, and not a false will-o'-the-wisp, which borrows the appearance of a friendly light to lead wandering men to their destruction. For, of a truth, in all my life I had never seen anything like unto her smile.

IV

A GREAT LADY

I LEFT the church and wandered through the shady streets to the Batisterio. I tried to gaze upon Ghiberti's gates, but the face of the woman came between me and the admirable work of the master, neither could I enjoy the perfection of Giotto's Campanile, nor the grandeur of Brunelleschi's dome for the same reason; and a like thing occurred in the presence of the work of my old master at Or San Michele. So, with the face and the smile ever before me I passed beyond the Palazzo dei Priori and the beautiful Loggia dei Signori and came to the Ponte Vecchio, which I crossed and proceeded further to where, hard by the great unfinished house of Luca Pitti, was the dwelling of Messer Niccolo Machiavelli. With him I had become acquainted when I was serving Duke Valentino as an engineer in Umbria and the Romagna, Messer Niccolo being at that

time an envoy from Florence at the court of the duke.

By good fortune he was at home. He greeted me cordially and took me into his library, where he was working upon a book that he told me was to be to the laws which govern the actions of men in matters of war and politics what my studies are to the laws that rule *artificiosa natura*. He made me break bread with him, and we discoursed long upon questions of grave import, namely, the best manner in which the mass of thoughtless men, who have no care but the acquisition of material riches and the pursuit of sensual pleasure, should be governed by men of *virtù*, who know the real significance of life and are not led astray by its vain semblances and superstitions.

Messer Niccolo also questioned me much about my own studies and discoveries in anatomy, astronomy, mathematics, and mechanics, being especially interested in my designs for new weapons—for example, one for great cannon, which could be loaded from the breech and so be fired more rapidly, and one for grouping many barrels of arquebuses together, either parallel or spreading like a

fan (said barrels to be fired in succession by a ratchet wheel), besides many other designs of a similar character. And in all his questions and observations and judgments he filled me with admiration because of the exceeding greatness of his mind, for he, like few of the present time, is able to think about the abstract laws of Nature, as well as about the practical results and effects which follow from them.

And, as our discourse proceeded in this fashion, the vision of the lady's face and of her smile faded away from me, and about sunset I returned to my house, the same Leonardo that had entered the Church of Santa Maria Novella in the morning.

There I found Salai, anxiously waiting to tell me that he had discovered who the lady was. He had followed her at a respectful distance until he had seen her enter her house in the Via dell' Amore, but a few steps from the Piazza Vecchia, and by artful inquiries among the shop keepers who lived hard by, had learned that the house belonged to Messer Francesco Giocondo, and that the lady, who was about thirty years of age, was his third wife. Salai had also discovered

that her name was Lisa, and that she was not a Florentine, though her family was a branch of our own Gherardini, but she had been born in Naples (her mother being a native of that place) which accounted for the fact that her appearance differed so much from that of the women of our city. Moreover, she had lost an only child, an infant daughter, who was buried in the Sepolcreto of Santa Maria Novella, and that was why she went there so often to pray.

Then I recollected that Messer Francesco was one of our *buonomini*, and that I had met him not long before in the Hall of the Grand Council, in connection with the discussion of the Gonfalonier's plan to have the walls of the said hall adorned by great paintings. I also recalled that when some opposition was made on account of the expense, Messer Francesco had taken the part of the Gonfalonier, and had spoken at some length, showing not only a good judgment in practical matters, but manifesting also a considerable knowledge and love of art. I heard afterwards that he was highly esteemed by all the great merchants and bankers and was also a generous patron of artists,

having had painted at a large price an altar piece by Puligo for the Giocondo chapel in the church of the Santissima Nunziata.

This lady, then, she with the subtle smile, was his wife, a patrician, one of the great ladies of Florence, and I was glad that the wise discourse of Messer Niccolo had driven her face from my mind. For I had often observed that there is nothing so likely to extinguish the soul as the daily life of the rich and noble, with its flood of material things and corporeal pleasures submerging the mind and preventing one from ever thinking of real worth. I had also often noticed in the conversation of great ladies, even those of great wit and well instructed, a certain lack of consequence, a constant flitting from one idea to another, like the butterfly which flutters about from flower to flower, and not like the bee which holds possession until it has extracted all the honey the flower contains. It seemed to me that the very multitude of beautiful and interesting things, with which rich and noble women were ever surrounded, in itself distracted them and kept them sometimes from discovering that they

had any souls at all. Had this lady been a woman of a simpler manner of life, I might have been tempted to ask her to sit for me, and while painting her to try to find out if the woman soul were concealed behind that subtle smile; but as it was, I laughed and said to Salai:

“Dear Drea, if I am ever tempted to leave the realms of art and science and engage in the mighty matters of war and politics, I shall certainly employ you as my chief envoy, for you have found out more about this lady in a few hours than I could in as many days. But, as you know well, I am at present much busied with various weighty matters, and how can I allow a little woman, just because she has a handsome figure, a fair face, and a gracious smile, to come between me and what I must needs perform?”

“But, Master, there is no woman like her,” exclaimed Salai, who was much excited. “And one woman like her is worth all the arts, all the sciences, all the practical works in the world.”

“Dear child, you think thus because you are young, and the hot blood courses freely

through your arteries and veins,¹ and, getting into the orbs of your eyes, prevents you from seeing clearly. But when your blood flows more calmly as mine does, you will see women as they really are, and will know that there are many things in this world of far more worth than they. Now listen to a little story."

"I listen, Master," Salai replied with a weary look of submission; but I, not heeding this, went on as follows:

"A sick man, being at the point of death, and hearing some one knocking at the door, asked one of his servants who it was. And the servant replied that it was one who called herself 'Madonna Bona' [good woman]. Then the sick man raising his hands thanked God in a loud voice, and said to the servant that he should let this lady enter quickly, to the end that he might be able to see one good woman [*una donna bona*] before he died, because in all his life he had never seen a single one."

Salai listened patiently until I had finished, but then rising hastily, he cried: "Master, I

¹ This passage evidently shows that Da Vinci had some notion of the circulation of the blood more than a century before the celebrated William Harvey.

do not understand you. All your life you have searched for the woman soul, and now when she is under your hand you turn away from her. With all your knowledge and wisdom *you* will never find her, will never know her—but *I* will." And so speaking he flung himself out of the house.

V

A YOUNG GALEOTTO

AFTER this Salai frequently absented himself and neglected not only his own painting but also the services which were due to me. Nevertheless he begged me for money to have a new cloak made and also a pair of shoes turned with rose color. The former cost more than thirty-five *lire* and the latter full two ducats; and yet the young rascal robbed me of the few *soldi* change, but I did not upbraid him, for the memory of benefits is very fragile where there is ingratitude. I also marked that he was much more serious than was his wont, which made me think that he was becoming involved in some love, higher and truer than the frivolous caprices which had hitherto distracted him; and, knowing his youth, his beauty, and his nature, this might perhaps be more of a benefit to him than an evil, for the passion of the soul drives away sensuality. Nor did I ques-

tion him about this matter, although his pre-occupation and his absences increased as time went on; since I knew well that if he wished to confide in me he would tell me in his own good time when he needed my advice and assistance, and to ask him any questions before this would be but to drive him into falsehood.

Besides I was occupied with a multitude of objects and therefore could not give as much thought to my beloved pupil as I had formerly done. In the first place I was making studies for my ~~Leda~~ and for a Madonna I had promised Her Excellency, the Marchioness of Mantua, and was painting a little picture for the Sieur de Robertet, who had been of great service to me after the downfall of Il Moro. Then I finished the cartoon of the Virgin and St. Anne, and it was exhibited in the convent of the Servites, all the artists of Florence as well as great crowds of the populace going to view it. And, mayhap on account of this it was finally decided that I should undertake the decoration of the Hall of the Grand Council—though the friends of Messer Michel Angelo Buonarroti procured that he should divide the work with me, per-

haps to see which of us two was the greater artist. Be this as it may, my subject was the Battle of Anghiari, and I must needs study all the incidents of that noted conflict and meditate deeply upon the manner in which I could fittingly set forth the glory gained by Florence on that fortunate day. Moreover I was frequently absent from the city, planning and superintending the works of our besieging army at Pisa, including a design for diverting the course of the Arno from that city; and, finally, at every spare moment I was pursuing my studies in the theorems of that science of sciences, geometry, and in the application of these to mechanics and to the sciences of *artificiosa natura*.

One day, when I was deep in the study of a problem concerning the sections of cones, Salai burst into the room; but seeing how I was occupied, he stopped suddenly and asked:

“Master, have you time to hear me? It is of the greatest importance.”

Observing how excited he was, I laid aside my work, for his sudden entrance had broken the connection of my thoughts, and I answered that I was ready to hear anything.

Then the youth, with many excuses and blushes and with frequent repetitions, told me that, after the day that he had beheld Madonna Lisa Gioconda, he had often waited about to see her at the church, and had even followed her to her home in the Via dell' Amore, but so respectfully that he had never been rebuked. And one day as she returned home with a serving woman, he following as was his wont, she had stopped at her door and accosted him as he passed. "Who are you?" she had asked. "I am Andrea Salai," he replied, "the servant and pupil of the great master Leonardo Vincio." "And does he send you to follow me?"—

Here I, seized by a sudden fit of anger cried out: "What do you mean, you rascal, by involving me in your mad pranks?"

But he blushing said: "No, Master, I have not involved you in any manner, for I answered her that you knew nothing of my following her, and indeed, that you would not allow it if you did; but I had been impelled by an irresistible desire to follow her, so that perchance from time to time I might have the privilege of beholding her beauty."

"And did she call out her lackeys," I

asked, "and order them to cudgel you as you so richly deserved?"

"By no means, Master," he replied. "On the contrary, she smiled with that marvellous smile, which is like the sun bursting through the clouds, and asked me to enter the house, for she would have some conversation with me, and said if I would answer her questions truly, I might, as a small reward gaze upon her poor beauty as much as I pleased. So she went in, and I followed her."

"Indeed, youth is willing to dare all things—not because it is brave, but because it does not know what danger is," I said laughing. "But what were the questions she asked you, you young scapegrace?"

"They were mainly about you, Master—how long you expected to abide in Florence? were you still dwelling with the Servites? what was your manner of living? upon what works were you now employed? and what were your plans for the great picture in the Hall of the Grand Council? And these questions I answered as well as I was able."

"But did she ask you nothing about yourself, Drea?"

"Yes, somewhat about my parentage and

my prospects, but more about my relations to you, and what I thought of you, of your character, and of your works."

I laughed and said: "I hope you gave me a good character, Drea. 'Tis said that servants know more about their masters than anyone else."

Hereat the youth seemed a little offended and said proudly: "I have lived long enough with Leonardo Vincio for you to know what I perforce must say." And then he went on to tell that she had caused him to return from time to time, to play the lute and sing to her when she was sad, and once or twice to sing at banquets that Messer Francesco had given to his friends; but at no time had she allowed him to forget for an instant what was due her from one of his station. "For, Master," he concluded, with enthusiasm, "she is the noblest, the purest, the most virtuous, as well as the fairest lady in the world, and of a very truth in her is the woman soul!"

"Why have you told me all this, my son?" I asked kindly, seeing how relieved he was now that he had at last spoken. "You know perfectly well that you can obtain nothing

that you wish from her, and that not I, nor anyone, except a sovereign prince, can aid you."

"I want nothing from her but the privilege of worshipping her, and of serving her in any way that is in my power, and this she has granted me. But, Master, listen. *This* is the reason I have spoken to you: Madonna Lisa has one desire, and that is—that her portrait be painted by the greatest master in the world."

"But—" I began.

"No, Master," he interrupted, "wait, and hear me out. She has this desire, but she is proud. She knows the mighty works you are employed upon, and she knows that princesses wait upon your convenience—yet she cannot bear to be refused openly. And so she wishes me—not to ask you if you would paint her portrait—but to discover whether you would entertain such a request."

"You know, Drea, just as well as she, how I am occupied at present, and more, that if I did not have to make our simple living by my painting, I should not take a brush again in my hand, but should devote myself entirely to

mathematics and to the study of *artificiosa natura*. And now with the scheme of the great battle picture occupying all my meditations in the realm of art, how can I step aside to paint the features of a pretty woman?"

"But, Master," he urged more earnestly, "this would not be like an ordinary portrait; it would be, as it were, a part of your studies of nature, of the nature of mankind. Do you not remember how often you have told me of the woman soul, and how you have wished to know it, to study it, and to paint its expression in the portrait of the woman in whom it dwelt? Now I swear to you, Master, by my faith in God and in His Holy Church, by the Blessed Mother of God, and by her son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that in this lady is veritably the woman soul. She is not like other women of her rank, she is not frivolous, she is not vain, nor proud and condescending, but she is as simple as a woman of the people and as well instructed as the greatest duchess in all Italy; the light of the stars shines in her eyes, and the glory of heaven is in her smile."

"She must indeed be something great,

Drea," I said laughing, "for she is making a poet, or rather a poetaster, out of you."

"Do not laugh, Master," he said impatiently. "Sometimes you seem so wise, and sometimes—pardon my boldness if I say it—sometimes so foolish."

"Yes," I said a little bitterly, "most men of the world consider me mad, and the rest a necromancer."

"No, I do not mean that," he said with his most winning smile. "I mean this: here is an opportunity to make an experiment, to judge the woman soul by actual experience—and you know how you love knowledge. Why turn away from this opportunity of acquiring the knowledge you have so desired so many years? You can, as you have often done, make such a contract as would allow you to drop the picture if you should not wish to work on it longer, but then you would have had the opportunity of discovering what you have so longed for if it be there."

"But how should I know that she is what I have longed for," I asked. "She may appear to you like a saint from heaven, and yet be a veritable demon in her heart; for woman has learned deceit from the serpent,

who tempted Eve with the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and Eve, forsooth, before she gave the apple to Adam, bit into the side which was evil, I fear woman—”

“Are you afraid of the knowledge of women?” he interrupted eagerly. “Has fear of results ever withheld you from any experiment in the search of knowledge? I must say, Master, that I never dreamed *you* could be afraid.”

This taunt indeed overthrew my composure, and without thinking I exclaimed: “No one has ever charged me with fear. Tell Madonna Lisa that Messer Francesco may come to talk about the portrait.”

And before I realized what I had said, Salai hurried from the house.

VI

THE CONTRACT

THAT night, when I retired to rest and began to meditate in the darkness upon my designs, the face of Madonna Lisa indeed appeared again before me with its subtle smile; yet not with the same power as on that first day, and I had but little trouble in driving it away by fixing my imagination upon the chief points of interest in my battle picture, namely the struggle for the standard, in which men and horses are mingled together in the bestial madness of the combat. And so when I awoke the next morning, calm and refreshed with sleep, I was willing to grant Messer Francesco's request even before he came, which indeed was at an early hour.

I felt myself drawn to him soon after our conversation began—a straightforward and honest but not brilliant man, a true Florentine, a typical representative of those prac-

tical and commercial but intelligent and art loving men who have made our city the center of the civilization of the world.

He seemed very proud of the beauty of his wife, and wished me to understand that I should spare no pains to make her portrait in point of execution fully equal to the best works I had produced, as he desired to have her beauty preserved for the admiration of his posterity.

“You have the true idea,” I said, “since every mortal beauty passes but not that of art.”

“When do you think you can finish it?” he asked.

“That I cannot say,” I replied. “No true work of beauty was ever accomplished in haste. Think how many ages it took the Arno to hollow out this lovely valley! In truth, impatience is the mother of stupidity, and those people who wish things to be done too rapidly do not desire perfection. It is impossible for me to produce great works in a hurry, as the good prior in Milan discovered when I was painting the *Cenacolo*.”

“I have heard of your reply to him,” laughed Messer Francesco.

“You must know also,” I continued, “with how many other great works I am at present occupied. Likewise, that it is necessary to be in the state of mind fitted for the special subject in order to create a great work of art. All I can promise is that you shall have it when it is finished to suit me—it may be two months, it may be two years.”

Messer Francesco’s brow darkened for a moment; then with a frank smile he said: “I understand, Master Leonardo, you mean to give me a masterpiece, and that is what I desire. I can see clearly that no man ever produced a masterpiece who worked when he was not willing, nay, even anxious. But when shall my wife come?”

“That will depend upon her as well as upon me,” I answered. “I would not have her sit for me when she might be weary or in a sad mood. You want her at her best, and I, who also admire her beauty, wish the same. In a few days the keys of the Pope’s Chamber are to be given to me so that I may have room enough to work on the cartoon of my battle picture, and I have hired a house hard by in the Via delle Belle Donne; but I must prepare in it a suitable place for

painting portraits as well as rooms for my experiments. But the house is not far distant from yours, and Madonna Gioconda, whenever she feels so inclined, may send to inquire, and, if I am not occupied and am in the proper mood, she may come, or I may send to her. But this I must say beforehand:—I shall not paint every time she comes. It is often best to look and meditate, and not to put the brush upon the picture until you know what you wish to do.”

“That is wise,” said Messer Francesco.

“As soon as I have everything arranged in my new abode I shall let you know, and Madonna Gioconda may come to settle upon the pose.”

“But what will be the price of the portrait?” asked Messer Francesco, remembering that he was a man of business.

“That will depend upon what the picture may become. When it is finished, we can have it valued by some of your friends, and you shall pay the price they decide upon. Until that time you shall pay nothing.”

This proposition pleased him, and, having made out the contract to our mutual satisfaction, we parted.

VII

THE FIRST SITTINGS

THEREUPON I set about having prepared in my new abode a place suitable for painting this portrait as well as others which I foresaw I should have to undertake, and also for the posing of the models for my studies for other pictures, since much of the beauty of the painter's work depends upon the atmosphere which surrounds the subject to be painted. For, if you place yourself in the street at close of day or in cloudy weather, you will note what grace and sweetness will appear in the faces of the men and the women who then pass by. Therefore, I had fitted up a court, which was ten *braccia* in breadth and twenty in length. The walls, ten *braccia* high, were tinted black, and at the top of the wall was a projection like a cornice, with an arrangement that when the sun shone in a curtain could be drawn across, which would be unnecessary when it was

cloudy weather or towards evening. And in this way I could secure a perfect atmosphere [*aria*].

When all was prepared I sent word to Messer Francesco, that I was ready, and Madonna Lisa came accompanied by a friend, a certain Madonna Elena, a gay and frivolous young woman of much superficial prettiness in feature and color; but in truth she was like a cage full of chattering magpies. I placed Madonna Lisa against the dark wall in a comfortable chair so that she might not be soon fatigued. On the broad arm of this she could rest her elbow and also display to the best advantage her perfect hands, which she had happily in no way disfigured with rings. And then, having ordered Salai to stretch the curtains across the court, for the sun was shining, I seated myself at the easel and began to draw the gracious outline.

But the presence of Madonna Elena was at the same time an assistance and a hindrance to good work on my part. For she was always talking, leaving but little chance for either Madonna Lisa or me to utter a word; and though she frequently said amusing things, which brought to the face of my

sitter somewhat of the smile I wished to draw, yet her constant and often meaningless chatter so disturbed me that I could not think two connected thoughts. May God have mercy upon her husband!

Therefore, having made several attempts and having accomplished nothing worthy, I set aside my easel, refusing to let the magpie even glance at it, which indeed greatly offended her; but for that I cared little; and I said:

“I can do nothing to-day, Madonna Lisa. Something is not perfect in the surroundings, in the atmosphere, and I find myself unable to do as good work as the poorest of my pupils. What it is I cannot explain; but you must come again soon, and I shall begin a new drawing.”

“I understand,” said Madonna Lisa with a glance at her friend, the magpie, who was totally oblivious of anything but her own perfections. “I understand, Master Leonardo, and when I come again I shall see that the atmosphere is what you require.”

“How can you do that?” asked the magpie. “Has one sitting to the great necromancer made a sorceress of you?”

“That was not needed,” I remarked.

“Why?”

“It is my secret,” smiled Madonna Lisa, “and I certainly shall not tell it to you, for you would have the whole town gossiping about it before sundown.”

This sharp pointed arrow, however, glanced harmlessly off from the impervious armor of Madonna Elena’s self-content. With a thankful glance I showed Madonna Lisa that I knew what she meant. And so they departed.

When Madonna Lisa returned on the following day, she was accompanied only by an old slave, Maria, who had been her nurse, and who, establishing herself in a comfortable chair, promptly fell asleep, and, by the blessing of God, breathed quietly and did not snore. The day was cloudy so that I did not need the curtain and being in the proper mood I worked rapidly and well. For the night before in the darkness I had called up in my imagination her face and figure as clearly as if she had sat before me, and had arranged and rearranged the pose until I had everything to suit the idea I had formed in my mind of what would be most fitting for

the portrait, and when in fact I posed the living woman I saw that I was right. So absorbed in my work did I become that for some time I did not speak a word; but, at last, looking up at her face, I saw that it was covered as with a cloud.

“Are you tired, Madonna Lisa?” I asked.

“No; only a little sad.”

“Pardon me, Madonna, but why?”

For a little space she was silent, and then said softly: “I will tell you, Master Leonardo, for you will understand.—Often when I am alone, or there is silence about me, my thoughts fly over to the Sepolcreto, and I—”

Here she ceased, and I said softly: “I know how you feel, Madonna. Where there is the most feeling there is the greatest martyrdom, there is the greatest martyr. And I, who know how to suffer, know how to feel with you.”

She said nothing, but the grateful look in her eyes showed me that I had not spoken amiss. After a time I continued: “To talk now of ordinary things would be wrong, and I am no priest to give you the consolations of Holy Church. Would you like music?”

“Oh, it would delight me if you would play your lute, Master Leonardo, for I have often heard of your wonderful music. But that would keep you from your drawing.”

“I have done enough with my crayon for to-day. But I should like to look at you for a time, so that, as is my custom, I may meditate upon your picture before I fall asleep. And that can be done while I play.”

So I brought my silver lute, and tuning it I first played a soft and soothing melody. Then, as I saw her face grow more cheerful, I gradually began a livelier strain, in which I continued until I saw her smile once more return, and it did not pass away. As I ceased for a moment, to tune my lute to another mode, she asked:

“Will you sing for me, Master Leonardo? Your music is beautiful beyond words, but I have heard that you make perfect songs, and I fain would hear one.”

“Ten years ago, Madonna, I would have sung for you gladly, for, as they have probably told you, I once possessed a voice that was not disagreeable. But now—I have lived more than fifty years. Still, would it

please you if I should call Salai to sing for you? He has a voice as beautiful as his face, and he plays the lute excellently."

"I know that, for I have heard him often both play and sing. He is a dear boy, and I have a great affection for him. But I wish to hear your own songs."

"He knows them well, for I have taught them to him, and with his fresh, young voice they sound very sweet—"

"Then you will not sing to please me?" she asked.

"That is not so, Madonna. I do not say I will not. I only must say I can not. Shall I call Salai?"

"That will not be just what I want," she replied after a pause. "And I am sure your judgment of your voice is wrong, for though you may have seen fifty summers, yet you seem to me far younger than many who have been born long after you—indeed far younger than my husband, who is but forty."

"What you say may be true as regards the spirit," I said, "which when it is occupied with great things, with joyous creating, remains ever young, like unto Nature, who renews herself with every Spring, or like the

sun, which stands in the center of the universe, and never failing gives forth to the earth and the stars youthful heat and vigor. But, alas! with the body it is as the leaves of the trees which wither and fall away, and though the soul may renew itself in the realms above, the body disintegrates, and—”

“Then you will not sing,” she interrupted with a strange look in her eyes.

“You asked for music, Madonna,” I answered. “When my voice began to fail I ceased to sing, and when my hand begins to lose its cunning I shall cease to paint. Shall I call Salai?”

“Then I cannot change your decision?”

“You may reshape an unbaked vase; but a baked one—no.”

“You are very self-willed, Master Leonardo.”

“I only say what is true.”

“You may call Salai,” she said with a petulant look, “for I would hear your songs even though from the lips of another.”

But after the youth had come in, blushing with delight at being able to do something to please Madonna Lisa, and after he had sung several of my songs, the petulant look

left her face, as she gazed upon the beauty of the youth and drank in the beauty of his voice. The subtle smile returned, softly as the dawn, and I sat there motionless while her perfection sank into my soul. The evening drew on, and her face became even more gracious as the shadows deepened. At last she rose with a start and cried:

"I have forgotten myself. I should have been at home long before this. It is almost dark." And she roused her nurse hastily.

"Do not fear, Madonna," I said. "Your house is but a short distance away, and Salai shall accompany you with a torch."

As the youth went to fetch the light, she came to me, and said softly: "Master Leonardo, you have done much for me to-day—more than you know of. I have learned what I did not know before."

"I am glad, Madonna," I said. But I did not ask her the meaning of what she had said, though I suspected what might be its import. For I well knew that no questioning would bring the truth from her were she not ready to tell me of her own accord. She waited a moment as if expecting me to question her, and then, holding out her hand,

said in a voice that trembled a little: "You are a man, Master Leonardo," and then departed, with Salai bearing the torch before her, and the old slave following behind.

BOOK II—LEONARDO

I

THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS

I WAS in the Market, buying caged birds and setting them free, when I heard close by me the voice of Madonna Lisa saying:

“Master Leonardo, this seems a strange pastime for a great man like you. What is it that so interests you?”

“There are two things, Madonna,” I replied. “In the first place I am studying the birds and their manner of flying, and, secondly, I love to free these winged creatures that have within them the soul of freedom. It gives me great joy to see them spread their light wings and soar into the free air.” And I opened the cage of another bird, and bade Madonna Lisa notice how timorous the poor little thing was at first, scarcely believing that his prison was unbarred; how he stepped out carefully, looking about as if for some new foe; then

how he opened and closed his wings, fluttering his feathers, then ran a little distance and finally swept up into the free air. "Did you note the motion of his wings as he lifted himself from the ground?" I asked. "Is it not beautiful?"

"In truth it is beautiful and marvellous. But do you think, Master Leonardo, that you can ever imitate it?"

"Why not? If the birds, who have not reason, can travel through the air, why cannot man, who has reason, discover the laws of nature that the ignorant birds use in their flight?"

"Yet how could he use them, being so much heavier than the air?"

"Is not the bird also heavier?" I replied, "and yet it flies through the air. The bird's body is only an instrument, operating by mathematical laws, and it is in the power of man to make this instrument with all its motions—though not with so much power and control, especially in the power of balancing, since the bird's mind is one with its instrument, and so it can act more certainly and quickly than the mind of man which would be outside its instrument of flight. There-

fore, it is necessary for the mind of man to learn to imitate the mind of the bird."

"Have you done this?"

"Not yet. And I am therefore still studying how the birds move, not only in rising from the ground, but in meeting the different currents in the air, just as the skilful mariner meets the varying currents in the water. So you see it is also necessary to study the motions of the air."

"How can you do this?"

"By watching the birds, the movements of banners and of kites, and then I have constructed some small models of birds, the wings being worked by a coiled spring, which fly very well in a room or in still air; but when they meet an adverse wind they fall to the ground."

"Why, Master Leonardo?"

"Because they have not the mind of the bird to balance themselves, or to accommodate themselves to new conditions. Could I find a force, powerful enough to lift a man from the ground, I should soon learn how to meet the varying currents of the air."

"And your little models of birds really fly? I can hardly believe it."

"If you will come to my house, Madonna, I will show you."

So we set forth on our way, accompanied by Maria, the slave.

. . . The last bird I so arranged that it flew in a circle and alighted in the lap of Madonna Lisa.

"This is truly wonderful," she said, "and I doubt not that you will soon make your birds large enough to carry a man. But what led you to attempt this?"

"It seems to be my destiny."

"What do you mean?"

"In the first recollections of my infancy I recall that being in my cradle a falcon came to me and opened my mouth with his tail and struck me with his tail many times between my lips."

"That is strange."

"I am not superstitious, Madonna, but from my earliest years I have loved the birds and have spent hours and hours in watching them and in studying their movements. And think of the possibilities of human liberty when man can fly through the air like the free birds of heaven!"

“How you must love liberty, Master Leonardo!”

“The love of liberty is the greatest thing in man.”

“But is not the power of ruling man still greater? For my part I can think of nothing more desirable than the power to sway the destinies of men and to make them subservient to my will. What earthly greatness can exceed that of a ruler of men!”

“The rulers of men are not such because of their own greatness (for no one can have greater dominion than that over himself), but because of the littleness of the men they rule. It is not the tyrant who makes the slaves, but the slaves that make the tyrant; and the tyrant is more of a slave than the men he forces to serve him.”

“You speak in riddles.”

“I know well that tyrants, least of all men, order their lives as they desire; for they must always be plotting and planning and doing many things they do not wish in order to keep their place—and all the time they are like prisoners under sentence of death, never knowing when the axe will fall. But a man who has dominion over himself, and

who loves liberty so much that he will not have others serve him against their will, can never be made a slave. For there is no power that can destroy the freedom of the soul.”

“What you say sounds very grand, Master Leonardo. But even you, with all your love of liberty, have served tyrants.—Have you forgotten Ludovico il Moro, or Cesare Borgia?”

“By no means, for they were very useful to me. I served them, even as I serve the Republic of Florence to-day, because at the time they alone could give me the means of carrying out the works I am able to do. They are men no better than I, no better than any Florentine citizen, but to them slavish minded people had given great power and wealth, and why should I not use that power and wealth to make manifest what I have created in my mind. I must use the instruments that come to my hand, but I need not cringe and truckle like a slave unless I have the soul of a slave.”

“I should like to see the great Leonardo ruled by some man—or some woman,” she said laughing.

“If I were so ruled I should not be the great Leonardo, as you call me, or even the Leonardo that you know; but a very pitiful, rascally slave.”

“How proud you are!” she cried, still laughing. “Do you not know that pride is one of the deadly sins?”

“Certainly. And also one of the saving virtues.” . . .

II

THE ZINGARA

ONE day, while Madonna Lisa was sitting for her portrait, a wandering Zingara gained admittance to the studio, saying she had been sent by Madonna Elena. She was a withered old woman who nevertheless bore herself with a certain native dignity; and her face, a grotesque tangle of wrinkles, was ennobled by a finely arched nose, and illumined by keenly piercing eyes, the intensity of whose expression was in truth somewhat disquieting. When I first looked at her I wished to make a careful study of her head. Yet when she said she had been sent to tell Madonna Lisa's fortune I was for putting her out of the house. But Madonna Lisa interfered.

"Let her stay, Master Leonardo," she said. "Madonna Elena has told me that this Zingara revealed unto her many remarkable things concerning her life; and I too am

curious to know something of what the future may have in store for me."

"Then, Madonna, I shall withdraw until your curiosity is satisfied."

"It will not be long."

But as I was laying aside my colors and brushes, a sudden change came over her expression, and with an eagerness that with her was unusual, she exclaimed:

"No, do not go. Let us look into the future together. I am more curious to hear what she may say about you than about myself. You will not refuse to indulge this little caprice of mine, will you, Master Leonardo?"

So I, desirous of keeping her in good humor, consented; and, also at her wish, agreed that the foolish performance should begin with me. The Zingara then, taking my hand, became apparently absorbed in studying the lines that mark the palm, muttering to herself, and from time to time looking up into my face with her keen eyes. As for me, I was watching Madonna Lisa intently to see how she would take this foolishness, and, truly, it seemed to interest her exceedingly. At last the Zingara spoke in

an earnest tone, and, indeed, told many true things concerning my past life and my character as a man, an artist, and a searcher after truth, which it is not needful to record here, and which she may have learned from hearsay. But in conclusion she said:

“You have passed the meridian of life, but you are full of vigor, for your line of life is strong. You will live to be a gray-beard, and you will die full of honors far from here in a foreign land. You have never yet loved, but you will love a beautiful woman with your whole being, body, soul, and spirit; and in your love you will discover that for which you have been seeking all your life.”

She ceased, and I said laughingly: “Now it is your turn, Madonna Lisa, to sound the turbid depths of the future.”

“I have changed my mind—I fear—” she began hesitatingly. Then suddenly noting my smile, she turned to the Zingara and said: “No, I am not afraid. Tell me what the future has in store for me.”

After the same mummeries, during which Madonna Lisa kept her eyes fixed on me, the Zingara said:

“Madonna, you have heretofore led a rich

and happy life—though, indeed, it has been clouded by one great sorrow. You are proud of your beauty and of your intellect, for through them you have always dominated men. But you, who are created for love, have never loved—”

“I love my husband,” interrupted Madonna Lisa.

“Yes, yes,” replied the old woman nodding her head knowingly. “Yes, you do love him with all the love he can understand, with all the love he desires. But that is not the highest love, the love of the soul. That love you have not known—because of fear. Your line of life is short. Still, before you pass away, you will know that highest love, and it will be the crown of your existence, for I seem to see that you will die in giving birth to your soul.”

When she ceased Madonna Lisa said no word, and her beautiful face was clouded, mayhap because of the doleful prophecy of a short life. So, to restore her spirits, after I had paid and dismissed the Zingara, I said in a light and mocking tone:

“Now that nonsense is over we can return to our work.”

“Why do you call it nonsense, Master Leonardo? Did she not say many true things about your past life and your character when she had looked at the lines of your palm?”

“And did you not note that she looked in my face at the same time?” I answered. “It is true that the lines of the features show in part the natures of men, their vices, and their temperaments. One who has had much experience can often speak truly of the past lives of those whose faces he has studied, and, perhaps, this may also be true of the hand and of the other parts of the body. For the soul has made the body to be its instrument, or its house if you will, and where, for example, the house is unkempt and disorderly, you can easily divine the character of its tenant. But as for the lines of the palm being signs of the future,—think of this, Madonna,—you will find great armies slain by the sword in the same hour, and the lines in the palm are dissimilar in every one of the soldiers—likewise in a shipwreck. And this same argument may be applied to those tricksters who turn the beautiful and mathematical science of astronomy

to the making of horoscopes and other foolishness. Therefore I beg you not to put your trust in anything that you cannot make the subject of experiment, and not alone of one experiment, but of several, so that you may see that the same results follow in every case where the conditions are the same. For wisdom is the daughter of experience, and—”

“Yet everyone says that you yourself are one of the greatest necromancers,” she interrupted. “Is it possible that you are jealous of other practitioners of the black art?”

“Madonna,” I replied, “they speak falsely who say that I know anything of what is called the black art. I have studied nothing but the laws of *artificiosa natura*, which are open to everyone who has the patience to make experiment, and to me all necromancers are liars and cheats, deluders of the foolish multitude.”

“Then you are not a necromancer?” she said with a disappointed look.

“No; only a student of nature and its laws; but because I have learned things that other men do not understand, and because

I busy myself with things they never dreamed of, they call me a necromancer, and fear me, as men fear everything they do not know, for it is only the unusual that offends and terrifies.”

“And you have never even examined into the mysteries of the black art?”

“Why should I, Madonna? for it is certain that if this necromancy were really true, as people of low minds believe, nothing which is above the earth would be of so much service or damage to mankind. Because, if by means of this art, a man could turn light into darkness and disturb the serenity of the air by sudden gusts and fierce storms with frightful thunders and lightning running beneath the shadows, what a war he could wage by destroying lofty edifices, uprooting harvests, scattering armies, and sinking armadas? It is certain that he who could command such destructive powers would be the lord of all peoples, and no human genius would be able to resist his destructive forces.” Here I noticed that Madonna Lisa was smiling and continued as follows: “But why should I enlighten you still further, since what things could a man

not accomplish with such powers! And why should such a master remain among men, since he should have no care for any deity; but to satisfy his infinite appetite he could ruin God and all His universe!"

"And yet," said she merrily, "these mighty men are willing, nay, anxious to sell their marvellous powers for a few florins to anyone who is foolish enough to believe them. You need say no more to convince me, and right glad am I that you at least are not a necromancer, for with your colossal pride and love of unlimited liberty, you would not allow a single person besides yourself to exist in the universe, lest mayhap such a one might abase your pride or limit your liberty."

"No, no, I should be too lonely. I should need someone—perhaps a beautiful woman, as the Zingara said. For what would be the use of pride and power were there no one to witness my greatness!"

"That is true; for is it not written, 'it is not good for man to be alone'? But I thought you were different from other men, Master Leonardo."

I made no reply, but, seeing how beauti-

ful her face was with that mocking yet
tender smile, used my brush most dili-
gently. . . .

III

IN THE STUDIO

. . . "It is in our freedom that we are most like our Creator," said I.

"How you love freedom, Master Leonardo! I believe you would refuse all happiness or love if one tried to force it on you. And you would refuse all knowledge you had not gained yourself."

"There you are wrong, Madonna. I do learn from others; but only by testing their thoughts as I would my own. I would take nothing on authority from anyone on earth or in heaven."

"Now you are saying dangerous words, and I must not listen; I have been brought up to believe the doctrines of the Holy Church as they have been taught me. And what you have said, though it seems so true, may be the tempting of the Devil, for it overthrows everything I have hitherto believed. You

know Satan tempted our Mother Eve with the knowledge of good and evil."

"And God who created all things created the serpent, too, for his own good purposes. Since only through knowledge is love possible—"

"Master Leonardo!"

"Love is the child of knowledge, for you cannot love anything you do not know, and the greater your knowledge the greater your love. Also, you can have no full knowledge without knowing both the good and the evil, as you can see nothing without both shadow and light, and—"

"Do you intend to paint me to-day? If you do not I had better return home."

Then, knowing well that it is of no avail to talk to an unwilling listener, and reflecting how little honor it is to convince a woman, I had her seat herself in the accustomed place, and called Salai and Tommaso to make music in order to drive away the cloud that had settled on her face. But this time, though the young men played and sang surpassing well, they could not bring back her smile. Yet the cloud passed away, and in its stead appeared a wondrous and mys-

terious expression that seemed for the moment more beautiful than the smile I was trying to reproduce. It was like the haze that sometimes at dawn hides the approach of the sun. Was it the birth of her soul? I laid down my brushes and fell to considering her face.

When she perceived that I was no longer painting, she asked:

“Are you tired of working, Master Leonardo?”

“No, Madonna, I am working with greater intensity than ever just now.”

She lifted her eyebrows.

“I am working with my mind which directs my hands.”

“Thank you for your music,” she said to the youths; “you may cease now.”

When they had departed, she rose, and standing before me asked:

“Master Leonardo, what is going on in your head? I cannot make it out.”

“Nor can I always.”

“You are a mystery. Sometimes you elevate me, and sometimes you cast me down. Then I do not like you.”

I smiled but said nothing. Why should

I? She lives in a different world from mine, I thought. She is young and longs for life and pleasure. I wish to meditate. She loves the fullness of life in her beautiful, young, and healthy body, and new thoughts, new truths disturb her, since the soul stands outside the body when it meditates. At her age was I not like unto her? Alas! each one stands in the center of his own universe, even as each one stands in the center of the earth's surface. Yet this similitude does not hold perfectly, for with one step you can place yourself in another hemisphere of the earth. But can you step into the universe of another? . . .

. . . "When the proud giant fell because of the bloody and miry state of the ground it was as though a mountain had fallen, so that the whole country shook as with an earthquake, and terror fell on Pluto in Hell. From the violence of the shock the giant lay stunned on the level ground. Suddenly the people, seeing him lying as one felled by a thunderbolt, turned back like ants running over the body of a fallen oak. And

these, rushing over his enormous limbs, cut them with innumerable wounds. But by this the giant being roused, perceiving himself almost covered by the multitude, and suddenly feeling the smarting of the stabs, sent forth a roar which sounded like a terrific clap of thunder, and, placing his hands on the ground, he raised his terrible face, and, having lifted one hand to his head, he found it full of men and rabble sticking to it like the minute creatures which not infrequently are found there. Wherefore with a shake of his head he sent the men flying through the air, just like hail when driven by the fury of the winds. And many of these who were not killed by the fall he slew, stamping on them with his feet; but others, clinging to his hair and striving to hide in it, seemed like sailors in a storm, who climb up the ropes in order to lessen the force of the wind by taking in sail. And—”

“But what do you mean by this story?” she asked, interrupting me in the full fervor of my narrative.

“It is a part of a satirical *novella* I am thinking of writing to show the littleness and meanness of men.”

“Do not do it, my friend. You can make such beautiful pictures and such exquisite songs. It is worse than those hideous faces you have drawn, in order, as you say, to discover the law of beauty. But this is to no such purpose, since it is all imaginary, besides being disgusting. You may make ugly studies, but you never paint hideous pictures.”

“I did once.”

“I remember that terrible *rotella*.¹ I saw it once, and it haunted me for days. But you have never done such a thing since. And why should you, the great master, who are so far above other men, trouble yourself with their littleness and meanness? It is not worthy of you.”

“But suppose I were not so far above other men as you imagine—”

“Then you should be.”

“Why?”

“Because you can be.”

“I am not so sure of that, Madonna.”

Then looking me straight in the eyes she said:

¹ Monna Lisa evidently refers to the “shield” which the youthful Leonardo painted for a peasant, and which his father carefully preserved.

“Tell me, Master Leonardo; do you think that story is worthy of you?”

“I did.”

“Do you think so now?”

“I do not know.”

“Then meditate upon it as you do upon your other works, and after a time I shall ask you again about it. But do not tell me any more of it—I will not listen, for I hate it. Tell me another story—one with a meaning like the other tales you have told me.”

“I know a story about a butterfly.”

“That is better.”

“The vain and wandering butterfly, not content with being able to fly at its ease through the air and beguiled by the tempting flame of the candle, decided to fly into it. But its joyous impulse ended quickly in grievous misfortune, for its delicate wings were burnt in the flame; so that the hapless butterfly, having dropped all scorched at the foot of the candlestick, after much lamentation and repentance, raising its face, exclaimed: ‘O false light! how many like me must thou have miserably deceived in the past! And as for me, if indeed it was neces-

sary to see light so near, ought I not to have known the sun from the false light of filthy tallow!" "

"And what is the moral of your fable?"

"Can you not tell it yourself, Madonna?"

"I see two meanings to your tale. And one pleases me, while the other displeases me."

"What are they, Madonna?"

"As you would not tell, neither shall I."

I thought I understood what meanings she had in mind, being especially certain of that which displeased her, and so I did not urge the matter, though I saw that she expected to be pressed to tell. Then, after waiting for a space, when she perceived that I would not ask her again, she said:

"That story was better than the first—but, just as a favor, tell me another—one which can have but one meaning, and that one which shall please me."

"I will try, Madonna." And so I began:

"The mirror gloried greatly while it was holding in itself the Queen, and when the Queen had departed the mirror remained in the . . ."

. . . "Have you no religion, Master Leonardo?"

"Yes, Madonna," I replied with much earnestness. "I have a religion, and it is very real to me; but it is not the religion that the pharasaical friars teach the foolish multitude, whatever may be the belief they may hold in their own hearts. And perhaps it would not be pleasing to you."

"Above all things I wish to hear what you believe."

"Then, Madonna, I believe in one God, infinite and eternal, the Prime Mover and Creator of all things, good and evil; for if any other power created evil in opposition to God, it would be another god, and the Prime Mover would not be infinite or eternal. And I love God, not only because it is my natural duty, but because He gave me my life and prolongs it to the present day, for I could not live without his will. And I worship the wonderful justice of the Prime Mover, because He does not wish that any force or potency should fail in the order and quality of its natural effects, whether they be evil or good; for in this way He makes it possible for the soul

of man to be free, having the choice between good and evil. Above all, He is no petty sovereign who traffics in his favors for earthly wealth through the medium of priests and friars, but with never failing justice He sells all good things to us for the price of labor."

"But, Master Leonardo, that sounds very much like some things I used to hear from Fra Girolamo Savonarola, and yet he always urged us to go frequently to confession and mass and to observe all the festivals of our Faith, while you seldom or ever appear in the churches—and I do not believe that you have confessed for years."

"What should I have to confess to a stupid friar, who could have no comprehension of the thoughts that are in my mind or of the motives that inspire my actions? And as for Fra Girolamo—while he was an earnest man and loved the truth as he saw it, yet he was ignorant and narrow, and despised the beautiful things of God's universe and the beautiful arts by which men of genius create things in the image of God,—and so justly he met his doom. There is among the number of the foolish a certain sect of

hypocrites, who continually study to deceive themselves and others, but more to deceive the others than themselves, yet indeed deceive themselves more than the others; and these are those saints that reprove the painters, who on the days of church festivals study the things appertaining to the true knowledge of *artificiosa natura*. And yet this is the true mode of learning to know the Worker of so many miraculous things, and this is the true way of loving so great an Inventor; for in truth great love is born from a great knowledge of what one loves. Moreover, if you love the Creator for the good things you expect to gain from Him, and not for His highest *virtù*, you will be like unto a dog which wags his tail and jumps about, fawning on any man who will give him a bone. But if the dog knew the true *virtù* of such a man, he would love him so much the more—that is, if he were able to understand such *virtù*.” . . .

. . . The young Raffaello Sanzio of Urbino, who was at that time abiding in Florence, came often to the Pope's chamber

when I was at work on the cartoon of the battle picture, and to my studio when I was painting—the latter especially when Madonna Lisa was there. I was very glad of this, since his beauty and lively conversation always put her in an excellent humor. For sometimes after talking with me she would seem much disturbed—her face darkened with trouble that even Salai's singing could not always drive away.

One day Messer Raffaello asked if he might be allowed to sketch her, and, when permission was granted, he made an excellent drawing, but which gave the impression of an entirely different person from the one my picture revealed.

"I do not like his drawing," Madonna Lisa said, when he had departed. "It is not like me."

"But perhaps it is like what he sees."

"That is the trouble. He does not see me as I really am. He has not seen beneath the surface."

"Yet it is very pleasing."

"Not to me. But, Master Leonardo, have you noticed that since he has frequented your studio he has ceased to paint as for-

merly in the manner of his master, Perugino, and that his work becomes more and more like yours? I visited his studio the other day with Francesco and saw a Madonna he had just finished. There was much of it that might have been by your hand."

"Why not, Madonna? We can all learn from each other. I, too, have seen that picture and have noted how much better and truer it is than his earlier work. Undoubtedly he has learned from me as I too learned from the Milanese painters when I first went to serve Il Moro. But though he has adopted many of my methods, and though some parts of his work may resemble mine, yet his picture as a whole would never be mistaken for one by Leonardo Vincio. Messer Raffaello is not like those little painters who can only copy. What he may get from me he makes his own, and his pictures are infused with his own spirit. He is young yet, but if he continues in the same path, he will become one of the greatest painters in the world."

"Perhaps. But he will never become as great as Leonardo."

"How do you know that?"

"I could rule him—easily—if I so desired."

"And Leonardo?"

"That question is unworthy of you, and so I shall not answer it." . . .

. . . "How were you able, Master Leonardo, to finish the portrait of Francesco so rapidly? You have been at work on mine nearly two years, and yet you say that it is still far from completion."

I laughed and replied: "That is a strange question to come from Madonna Lisa, who from the easy way in which she manages her husband must know him perfectly."

"What has that to do with it?"

"And then," I continued, disregarding her question, "you should be aware that men are much easier to paint than women. Their features are more rugged and pronounced, and the shadows which give character of the face are simpler and more definitely marked. Of course handsome youths, whose features are still delicate, and whose characters are not yet fixed, are almost as difficult as women; but your Francesco is no longer young, his features are

strongly moulded, and his character, which has been fixed for years, is, as you well know, simple, straightforward, and strong."

"Would *you* be difficult to paint, Master Leonardo?"

"I do not know, for I have not yet tried it, though I may some day. Ask Salai or Boltraffio; they are both attempting it."

"What do you think of their attempts?"

"I have no right to an opinion. No one is a proper judge of the correctness of his own portraits, for these represent him as he appears to others. And he, if he be intelligent and honest with himself, will know many things in his nature that never appear to the world, and, if he be stupid or self-deceived, will have formed an utterly false idea."

"Would I be a good judge of your portrait, Master Leonardo?"

"In many things—yes, I have revealed more of myself to you than to any other human being."

"Then you have not revealed yourself entirely even to me?"

"Can you ever reveal yourself entirely to another, Madonna? Even if you should

make an honest effort, that other could only receive those things he could fully understand. The rest either would not exist for him, or, if partly understood, would mislead him."

She remained for some time silent and thoughtful. Then rising from her chair she went over to the portrait of Madonna Ginevra Benci, which I had just finished, and said:

"But you have completed this? And Madonna Ginevra is a woman, beautiful, clever, and well-instructed."

For reply I took the portrait and placed it beside her own.

"Look for yourself and judge," I said.

For a space she regarded the two pictures intently and then said:

"Yes, you seem to me to have reproduced Monna Ginevra exactly—the soft hair, the fair skin, the full red lips, and that is herself looking at you from those lovely eyes—you almost expect her to speak. As for my portrait—well—as you have said, *I* have no right to an opinion. But I have a right to ask you your opinion of it."

"You are a problem, Madonna," I replied.

"In the first place a problem in drawing—to give the outlines of your head, your hands, and your body, without making the contours rigid or blurred. Then you are a problem in color—to give the light that glows in your eyes, the soft reflections that hover beneath your chin, and the subtle shadowy tints that flit across your features as your varying thoughts and feelings flit through your mind. But the most difficult problem is the problem of the soul. Shall I ever be able to know what your soul is?"

"You have a great desire to know everything, Master Leonardo; and I do not wish to be merely one of the things that you know so well. I would rather be the one you did not know, for only thus can I save myself. For my part I do not wish to know everything—too much knowledge makes me afraid."

"Then you do not wish to come any more to my studio?"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried hastily. "I must have my portrait by the greatest master in the world."

"But every time you come I discover something. And I shall not consider the

portrait finished until I have discovered and reproduced what you really are—mayhap not in every subtle manifestation, but in the main essentials. It was to discover your soul that I undertook your portrait.”

“Discover not, if your liberty is dear to you. My face is the prison of love.” . . .

. . . “That was the story as Francesco told it to me; but as he was not present I am not sure that it is correct.”

“It is not altogether correct, Madonna,” I said. “Perhaps someone who is not my friend told him.”

“I thought that was the case when I heard the tale. Therefore do you tell me what really happened.”

“I would prefer not to speak of it again. You see it is not pleasant to me.”

“But you, who so love the truth, would not have me, your true friend, hear nothing but a false tale, and remain ignorant of the truth, would you, Master Leonardo?”

“Yet if you believe it to be false—”

“I also desire greatly to know the truth, and you will not refuse me that, will you?”

“Then, since you desire it so much I will

tell you. I was passing by the house of the Spini, in front of which were a number of gentlemen engaged in discussing the meaning of a certain passage in Dante. One of them called to me, and, stating the question, asked my opinion. At that moment Messer Michel Angelo happened by, and, knowing how much time and thought he has given to the work of the divine poet, I referred the question to him, saying that probably he could answer it better than I. But he said, 'Why do you not answer it yourself, wisest of men, you who spent sixteen years endeavoring to make a clay horse, and, when you tried to cast it in bronze, threw up the task in despair?' Then he turned his back upon me, but as he departed said over his shoulder, 'And you made those Milanese capons believe you could do it, too.' That was all."

"And is it true that you blushed deeply and made no reply?"

"About that blush I know nothing, but it is true I made no reply."

"Why did you not speak, Leonardo? With your wit you could have shown that upstart his proper place, and have taught him

that he should not be discourteous to such a man as you."

"I did not answer for two reasons. First, because one of the greatest sorrows of my life is the loss of my beautiful horse,¹ and then, because I have learned that in such cases as this patience is the best remedy."

"I cannot see it as you do, Master Leonardo."

"You will, Madonna, when you are older. For patience protects against injuries as clothes protect against the cold. If you add to your clothing as the cold increases, the cold will not be able to injure you. In a similar way for great injuries increase your patience, and then such injuries will not be able to offend your mind."

"You have spoken as you always speak, and to any person of judgment Buonarroti

¹ After Leonardo had worked for sixteen years on the equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza (which he always called his "*cavallo*" or "horse"), he finished the model. This was set up in the arsenal and was acknowledged, by all who beheld it, to be the greatest equestrian statue in existence. But the Duke Ludovico, who was on the verge of war with France, could not spare the money to cast it properly, and, when he was expelled by the French in 1499, the model was destroyed by the Gascon archers and arquebusiers quartered in the arsenal, who used it as a target.

must appear small beside you. As for me, I cannot endure the fellow."

"You do not know him, Madonna. He is a very great man, and if he lives will become still greater. For, though he does not know how to paint, his David is the greatest single figure produced in sculpture since the time of the Greeks."

"I shall not set my judgment against yours in discussion, Master Leonardo, but I do not agree with you. It was just because you differed with him about the place to set up his David that he began to dislike you. Then he knows that his picture in the great hall will be infinitely surpassed by yours, and he fears that, if you should once more turn your attention to sculpture, his colossal David, on account of which he is so puffed up, would sink into insignificance beside your smallest work."

"But, Madonna, he is truly a great soul, who does not depend upon antiquated authority; he loves and worships Nature and Truth and Liberty.—You do not know him."

"I know him well enough to be certain that though indeed he is no ordinary man,

he is not, nor can he ever become as great as Leonardo. And, you remember, you told me that just as soon as *Virtù* was born Envy was brought forth against her; and that there could sooner be a body without a shadow than *Virtù* without Envy. So Buonarroti is consumed by envy because he knows you are greater than he. I never liked him, and now I hate him. He—”

Here she stopped suddenly, then after a moment began to speak upon indifferent subjects, and, shortly after, saying she was fatigued, departed. When she was gone, though I was well pleased by what she had said in my praise, yet I could not help thinking how unjust she had been to that great man, Buonarroti, simply because he had been discourteous to me. And I was in some degree disappointed in that she, who was so superior to other women, had not been able to be just to a great man when her feelings were involved. However, the next morning when I awoke and remembered how happy her sympathy and appreciation had made me, this thought came into my mind: May there not be, after all, something greater even than Justice? . . .

[The following fragments are all that could be saved from a mass of tattered scraps, where some mouse had made a nest in the middle of Leonardo's manuscript:]

Do not desire for yourself riches that can be so easily lost; *virtù* is our true riches and the true reward of her possession. She cannot be destroyed, she does not abandon us while life is left us. As for material riches and external honors, you always hold them with fear, for these things leave their possessor tricked and scorned when he has lost possession of them.

O, human misery! to how many things have you enslaved yourself for the sake of money!

Behold a thing, which the more you fear it and the more you avoid it, the more you are brought near to it! This is poverty, for, the more you try to avoid it, the more you make yourself miserable and without repose.

Those hands into which snow ducats and precious stones soon tire of service, and such

service as they do render is only for their own selfish ends and not for others' good.

There is the same proportion between light and shadow as between truth and falsehood.

He cannot be turned who is fixed to a star.

The soul can never corrupt itself in the corruption of the body.

Lust is the cause of generation,
Gluttony is the maintenance of life,
Fear or caution is the prolongation of life,
Pain is the salvation of the bodily instrument.

Nature is full of infinite reasons (*ragioni*) that have never been in experience.

[The following is evidently from a conversation concerning Leonardo's battle picture.]

War is the most bestial of madnesses.

It is a most execrable thing to destroy a man's life, not only because of the wonderful work of nature in the human body but

also because of the respect due the soul that dwells in such a marvellous piece of architecture; since truly, whatever it may be, the soul is certainly a divine thing, and should therefore be allowed to occupy its habitation at its own good pleasure, and should not be driven from it by our anger or malignity.

How many generals and how many princes have passed away of whom not a single memory remains! And yet they strove only for commands, sovereignties, and riches in order to leave behind them a famous name.

He who does not esteem life does not merit it.

IV

THE TELESCOPE

I HAD several times spoken to Madonna Lisa of my studies concerning the nature and the movements of the heavenly bodies—what things I had already discovered, and what other discoveries might be made by further investigation. In all these matters she showed the greatest interest, often making remarks and asking questions which were much more pointed and showed greater intelligence than those of Madama, the Marchioness of Mantua, whose conversation had so delighted me when I had tarried in her Castello five years before. And when one day I told Madonna Lisa that I had discovered an arrangement of lenses through which the moon and stars might be seen magnified,¹ she did not rest until I had promised to show her the wonders, the description of

¹ This evidently explains the passage in the *Codex Atlanticus* (187, a) "*Fa occhiali da vedere la luna grande.*" (Make lenses in order to see the moon large.)

which had so aroused her curiosity. Therefore, one clear night in May, when the moon was full, I had my contrivance conveyed to her house in the Via dell' Amore, and accompanied by Messer Francesco we ascended to the roof where there was a belvedere excellently fitted for the purpose of astronomical observations.

Great was the amazement and delight of Madonna Lisa as she gazed through the lenses. At last she cried enthusiastically:

"It is all just as you have told me, Master Leonardo,—only the reality far surpasses your descriptions."

"It is always so with the works of *artificiosa natura*," I replied. "The reality is far more marvellous than any words that can be said; and why should we desire the impossible when the actual is so wonderful?"

When Messer Francesco had viewed the moon in his turn he asked me: "What are those dark spots which seem to the naked eye to form the image of a face? Through the glasses they look like shadows."

"You are not far wrong," I replied. "If you keep the details of those spots under close observation, you will often find great

variation in them, and this I myself have proved by drawing them." . . .

. . . Then, led on by Madonna Lisa's intelligent questions I repeated what I had told her before, how I was convinced that the sun did not move about the earth, and that the earth was not the center of the circle of the sun, nor in the center of the universe; but that it was a star like Jupiter and Venus, and, when the moon was below us performed the same office for it as it did for us on this night, and sundry other things of similar import, which were the result of my observations and mathematical calculations. But Messer Francesco yawned and said:

"All this must have taken you much time, Master Leonardo."

"Days and months and even years," I answered.

"I marvel greatly," he continued, "why you, the most famous painter of the age, who can dispose of any picture you may produce at any price you may choose to ask, can waste your time on such fruitless studies, which not only will procure you no money, but may even bring you into trouble with the Holy Church; for certainly your notion that

our earth is not the center of the universe seems to be heretical. And as your good friend I advise you to say nothing about it."

Then I, seeing he was not interested in the matter, ceased speaking to him, for you are a fool if you try to force your ideas upon an unwilling mind. But Madonna Lisa became all the more eager to look through the lenses at the moon and the planets that were visible, and to question me about them; and presently we noticed that Messer Francesco had fallen asleep. Then she asked me fewer questions and those in a low voice in order not to disturb him. At length, as we sat there side by side gazing into the heavens a silence fell upon us—a sweet silence, and from time to time we gazed into each other's eyes.

V

A WOMAN'S SYMPATHY

WHEN at last, I had painted in oils upon the wall of the grand hall a portion of my battle picture, and had failed in the attempt to burn in the colors by a method of my own invention, I was as it were seized by despair; for it seemed to me that my greatest works of art, like the *Cenacolo* and the *Cavallo* in Milan, were doomed to remain incomplete or to be destroyed by ignorant hands. I could not bear to meet with men who ever asked me how I was succeeding with my picture, which I grew to hate more and more every day, since I could not take my mind from those portions where the colors had run together, being too distant from the fire I had made to dry properly. For in my haste, having been urged by the impatient Gonfalonier, I had overlooked the truth that what may be perfectly successful in small things often fails when attempted

on a large scale because the conditions are so different. And this I should have known well from my experience in constructing mechanisms to imitate the flight of birds.

. . . One day I sent to Madonna Lisa asking if she could come, for I hoped that in the endeavor to depict her I might . . .

"You must not try to paint any more to-day," she said, rising from her chair and coming over to me. "You are too much troubled in mind."

"If that is true, then to paint you should be a recreation."

"No, my friend, the trouble is too deep for that. Tell me about it; that will ease your mind," she said as she seated herself near me.

"Why should I annoy you with my petty worries, Madonna? It is better for me to settle them within myself."

"Am I then nothing to you? You have called me 'your friend,' and yet what value is a friend if she cannot help you bear your troubles. Tell me."

"They are not worth while, and I am no weakling."

"No, my friend, you are only consumed

by pride. But I know what is troubling you, and indeed it is no small matter. It is a long time since you last sent for me, and I have divined the reason as I have waited for your messenger. Your trouble is about the battle picture. Francesco has told me of the failure of your experiment, and also I cannot help hearing what others say. And you alone, my friend, will not speak. Do I deserve this?" she asked as she looked me steadfastly in the eyes.

Then, as a river when a dam is broken pours its waters in a tumultuous flood, so I poured forth everything that had been torturing me. It was the first time in my life I had done such a thing, but I must needs confess that when I had finished there was within my soul a sense of relief and peace unlike anything I had ever felt before. Then my lady said softly:

"It is in truth a great trouble, my friend, but you cannot fail to succeed in the end and achieve one of your greatest triumphs."

"But I cannot see how I can complete it as I have begun."

"Then begin anew, as you did with the

Cavallo. If you cannot fix the colors in oil, why not paint in fresco?"

"It is not possible to render in fresco the effects of the smoke and the dust that makes so great a part of a real battle."

"Then continue your experiments, you will certainly find a way. In the end you cannot fail. I know it." And for a moment the look in her eyes made me feel that I should succeed.

"But, Madonna," I said, as doubt seized me again, "you do not know how I have grown to hate the picture. You yourself do not like it."

"What value is my like or dislike? I, an ignorant woman, who know nothing of real war! You are painting for men, and you have drawn the bestial madness of war, the horrible truth. I believe now every word you said to me when you showed me the cartoon. All men should know war as it really is, and Leonardo is the only man who can make them see it in its awful truth."

"You have not seen Buonarroti's cartoon then. Though still unfinished, it is marvelous."

“Yes, I went to view it a few days ago, because of late your enemies and enviers have been extolling it much. I must admit it is a good work in its way. It is a fine composition of half-naked bodies in vigorous attitudes. But that is all. And mark me, he will never put this work in color in spite of all the praises of his flatterers. Why? Because he knows well that his cartoon is only an episode, chosen to display his knowledge of anatomy, while yours is war itself.” Then she went on to say much more that I cannot now recall, and, whether it was her reasoning, or the enthusiasm of her sweet voice, or the sympathetic light in her lovely eyes, or the witchery of her subtle smile, or all together, I know not, but before she ceased she made me feel that once more I could take joy in the work, were it only for her sake, and that I could most certainly carry it to a successful conclusion. . . .

After she had gone I sat and meditated upon the beauty and sweetness of her nature, which had brought such comfort and joy to me in such sore trouble. And yet, when I likened her to an angel of God, I could not but remember what cruelty I had seen her

at times show to Salai, who, nevertheless, worshipped her and fawned upon her like a poor dog fain to lick the hand that has beaten him. Still I was not able to blame her or to think less of her on this account, but luxuriated in the happiness and hope with which her comprehension, sympathy, and encouragement had filled me. And as I looked back over the records I had kept of many of our conversations during the years I had been painting her, I noted that in truth she had spoken little while I had spoken much, yet that little had seemed to draw out the very best that was in me, and had made clear the understanding that had grown up between us in the years, so gradually, so quietly, that I had not become fully aware of it until this day when I so sorely needed her sympathy—the sympathy which she had given so simply, so easily. What was that, I thought, which, whether she were sympathetic and tender or heedless and cruel, drew men unto her and filled them with her? Was it in truth the woman soul?

BOOK III—LISA

I

YOUTHFUL PASSION

It was shortly after I had ceased working on the battle picture—for a time as I thought, but forever as God has decided—that Salai came to me one day when I was alone. I saw that he was much agitated by something he had in his mind, for, though he began talking about indifferent things, his words would stumble one upon another, and again and again he would stop, blushing and biting his lips. At last, looking upon him with much kindness, I said:

“Drea, you have something to tell me, something to confess. Do not fear. Have you not been long enough with me to know that whatever you may have done, my love for you never fails? Come now, tell me, what is it?” I put my arm about him and drew him unto me. He laid his beautiful head upon my shoulder for an instant, and looked into my eyes. Then breaking from

me suddenly, he covered his face with his hands and cried:

“Master, Master, it is not anything that you think, nor does it concern you, but I must tell someone or I shall perish.—I love her.”

“Whom?” I asked, though I knew well who it was.

“Who could it be but Madonna Lisa, whom everybody must love.”

“Drea, dear, since everyone must love her, why should not you? Then why are you so disturbed in mind? I am certain that the services you render are very pleasing to her.”

“I know that well, but that is not it. For these three years I have been content to serve her in every way—to bear the torch for her, to fetch and carry like a trained dog, to sing to her and make music for her like a tame bird, to come at her call and to go away when she bids me—and just to do all this has been the greatest happiness that I have ever known.”

“I have seen this, dear Drea, and it has pleased me very much.”

“And I, too, was content with this and was raised into the seventh heaven of delight

when she rewarded my service with a kind word, spoken in that voice which surpasses the voices of angels, or with that marvellous smile which is like the opening of a flower; and I have prayed daily that I might always be worthy of serving her, and that she might always be glad to receive my service."

"I have seen that, too, and also have been much pleased thereby, since because of her you seem to have found your soul. Not only have you withdrawn from your former frivolous companions and have checked your sensuality, but your work is much stronger and better."

"I know that, Master, I know that," he cried impatiently. "But that is not what I want now. Yes, I was happy to be her dog, to fawn on her for a kind word—But now—I want her—*her*—herself!"

"You are mad, my boy!" I cried in surprise.

"I know it, Master, I know it. I know how mad it is to desire such a thing—but I cannot help it—it is stronger than I. She, too, treats me as a boy—but I am no longer a boy—I am a man with a man's passions, with a man's desires."

“My poor Drea, how long has this been?”

“Only lately. But I cannot behold her without longing to cast my arms about her, to carry her off in defiance of all the world. And Messer Francesco, too, who has been so kind and generous to me, I hate him, yes, I hate him because—because he is her husband—because he is privileged to touch her—because—yes—because he may do with her what he wills—I cannot endure to see them together—” Here he stopped short for his passion was too great. I drew him to me again and endeavored to soothe him. And though at first he yielded to my caresses and seemed somewhat calmer, yet again he drew back and said, almost in a whisper:

“And—Master, I have been so envious of *you*. You she treats as an equal, nay, even as a superior. To you she unfolds the wondrous thoughts of her mind, the deep feelings of her heart, and you are privileged to express in your perfect work the sum of her perfections. And I have noticed as the years have passed how that first fear she had of you has passed away, and now—there is no one in the whole world who is so much to her as you. But you, in your wise folly have sat

there before her, calmly analysing and reproducing her, without once seeing that it was not merely a beautiful body and face to paint, nor even a brilliant mind to investigate, but a woman's soul—no, no—a woman's heart—crying out to you—holding out her arms to you—and you—you—deaf and blind!”

“In truth, my child,” I said, “you are in an evil case, and I shall do all I can to aid you—not to obtain your desire though, for you should not desire the impossible—”

“I know it,” he interrupted fiercely. “I know it only too well. And though I know that often great ladies have loved men of lowly birth, and have even given themselves to them, yet that is impossible with Madonna Lisa, for she is not only the most beautiful, the most desirable woman in this world, she is also the noblest, the purest, the best, for in her is the dwelling of the woman soul in all its perfection. And, Master, I know my own unworthiness. I curse myself whenever I find myself cherishing sinful thoughts about her. And yet the thoughts will come, and, though I may be able to drive them away for a time—yet they soon return, and

return with greater power. What shall I do?" Then he fell a-weeping. I drew him again to me and stroked his hair, while the tears flowed and the sobs shook his body. At last when he was still I asked him:

"Drea, dear, can you remember when this change came over your love?"

"Yes, Master, I can never forget it. You remember that drawing you made for the Leda, which she admired so much because, as she said, it set forth the beautiful symbolism of the myth without the least trace of the obscenity which had disgraced Buonarroti's design, which she hated. You remember her words, do you not, Master? She was sitting over there, and I was near by, having been playing the lute and singing for her. I carried her torch that evening, and at her door she told me how much she desired that drawing, but she would never ask for it, because you might need it when you came to paint that masterpiece, and she knew that you were too much occupied with important things to find time to make a replica. Then I said I would do my best to make her a faithful copy if she would accept it. This seemed to please her greatly; so I procured

a piece of paper exactly like that which you had used and with infinite pains made a copy so like that you yourself could not tell them apart."

"Then why did you not give her my drawing?"

"Master, now that you have spoken, I confess that I did—after I had shown you my copy instead of the original one day when you asked for it; and you, when you had looked at it and had made a few changes, put it away well satisfied that it was your own—"

"You rascally little imitator!" I cried. "I have warned you again and again against that vice of imitation. I see now that you will never be a great painter, but only a little Leonardo, not the great Salai, but only the little—'Salaino.' However, you are the one best fitted to do most of the work on the Leda, so you may begin whenever you desire—and use your own deceitful cartoon in the business, too."

"God reward you, Master, for I too love that picture even as she does, and I shall try to do the work so as to please both you and her."

"But go on with your story, Salaino."

“When I took her the drawing, she looked at it lovingly for a space—carefully examining every line—and then she cried with a look of horror: ‘Salai, you have stolen this—it is the master’s own work. You must return it immediately—before he discovers his loss.’ For you see, Master, her eyes, being those of love, could discern differences that neither you, the creator, nor I, the imitator, had detected. Then I told her how you had believed my copy to be your own work. She smiled and said that she would keep the drawing and treasure it greatly, not only because it was the work of the greatest master in the world, but because of the exceeding love I had shown in accomplishing her desire to the full. But she also charged me that, if ever you should discover the fraud, I should confess the theft, so that she might restore the original.”

“I am glad, Drea, that she has my drawing, though indeed yours is fully as good.”

“Not for her, Master. Alas! for her the work of Salai is not as the work of Leonardo.”

“But you have not yet told me of yourself.”

“Ah! Master, it is difficult. When I—when I was about to depart, she thanked me again and again, and held out her perfect hand, and I taking it knelt and kissed it, and then—she stooped—and—and kissed me—me, Andrea Salai, on the forehead. And, ever since, that kiss has burned into my brain, it has eaten its way into my heart, and I am no longer the same. Madness has taken possession of me. Madness, delicious, terrible madness, which indeed has raised me to the gods, but—I fear it will prove my destruction. Pity me, Master.”

“No, Drea, I cannot pity you, though I see plainly how you suffer, for well do I know that only through suffering do men become great. Madonna Lisa can be to you what Beatrice was to Dante, and will lift you from the Inferno, where now you are in torture, through the chastening fires of Purgatory, to the splendors of Paradise, the paradise of art, where, like a true son of God, you will create beautiful and great things, even as He does.”

“That might satisfy a soul like Dante, like you; but as for me I do not desire the paradise of art or any other paradise where she

would not be in my arms. For one kiss from her upon my lips I would willingly barter all hopes of Heaven and joyfully consume in the fires of Hell for all eternity.”

Seeing that it was impossible to reason with such divine madness, I comforted him as well as I was able, and indeed he seemed somewhat relieved because he had spoken of his love.

When he was gone I meditated much upon the case, and it seemed good that if I should be obliged to go to Rome, as was then probable, I should take the youth with me, for, perhaps, amid new scenes and among new companions and being far away from the subject of his desire, his sensual longing might change back into the more spiritual love, which would elevate him far above the common herd of men. And yet, I must confess, I myself envied somewhat the youth and the glory of his passion. Could it be possible that I too might feel as he did—and for the same object? Could it be possible that she, as Salai said, might love *me*, and we two—? No, it was impossible. I had seen more than fifty years, my blood ran calmly and sluggishly; I could neither in-

spire in her the love I should desire, nor could I love her in the manner she would desire. It was impossible. It was too late.

II

A DIFFICULTY

WHEN Madonna Lisa came to the studio the next time after the foregoing conversation, I told her that I knew of the substitution of the drawing, and was glad she had the original. I also praised Salai's work and spoke of what I thought he might accomplish if only he secured full dominion over himself. She looked very thoughtful as I spoke, and asked:

"Does any man ever gain full dominion over himself?"

"Mayhap not for all the time, for you remember the scripture, 'Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' But the strong soul is like a mighty prince, and, though evil minded subjects may sometimes rise in rebellion and for a time appear to have overcome their master, yet in the end he always asserts his power, and, having put

down the rebels with a strong hand, returns to rule as before."

"Always?" she asked with a strange look in her eyes.

"Always in the end, if he is truly a strong soul. It is only the weak who fail, while temporary defeat only makes the strong man stronger."

Then we looked at Salai's copy of my Leda, and she showed me how she knew my work from that of anyone else, and said:

"Salai can never do what you can."

"I do not wish him to. His chief fault is that his work too much resembles mine, and the pupil should preserve his own nature intact, even when he is learning most from his master. But Drea is young, and, with added years and increasing self-control—"

"He will never gain it."

"It is my hope, Madonna, to train a pupil who will accomplish what I have failed to do."

"It will not be Salai," she said with decision.

"Why do you judge him so harshly?"

"I do not judge him harshly," she replied.
"He is different from you. He is like the

little brook which flows joyously among the meadows and beneath the trees. Beautiful flowers grow along the banks, and in the branches that overhang, sweet birds are ever singing to the music of the stream, while its gay ripples reflect back the light from the blue sky in a thousand glittering tints. But you, Master, are a mountain torrent that rose in the eternal snows among the Alps, and first you tore your way amidst rocks and cliffs, destroying whatever opposed you, until you became a great river, and now you flow calmly but with irresistible force through rich lands and by mighty cities until you find at last your home in the boundless ocean which surrounds the world."

"But," said I, "Salai is capable of passion." And I was minded to tell her of his confession, but did not, because of his confidence in me.

"Not great passion," she rejoined, "the passion that moves the world. Like the streamlet he will foam and bubble over the little stones that may come in his way, and in the Spring he may flood some fields hard by; but he will soon subside and be the same joyous, laughing streamlet as before. I love

this little streamlet, and I have had much pleasure from its joyousness and beauty; but I know well that it is no mighty river. But, Master," she continued, changing the subject suddenly as was often her wont, "pardon me for asking again, but when do you expect to finish my portrait? I ask it now, because I am soon to go for a time to Naples—to visit my relatives—and it may be months before I return."

"And I, too, expect to go to Rome for a time. The Most High Pontiff has sent word to the Gonfalonier that he needs to consult me about some fortifications he is planning."

"Do you care as much to build fortresses as you do to paint pictures?"

"No, by no means, but there are useful things that are not beautiful—for example, men and fortresses. In the present state of affairs, Florence must stand well with the Most High Pontiff as well as with the Most Christian King, and so the Gonfalonier, though he desires greatly to have the battle picture completed, yet cannot afford to offend the pontiff. Therefore, though at present I should much prefer to work upon your portrait, I must go to Rome."

“What remains to be done? To me it seems perfect already.”

“There are two things that do not satisfy me. The first is your smile, which perhaps I may never be able to achieve, for it seems like the light of the sky that painters can only suggest in their pictures; and the other is the torso. The neck and the bosom and the hands are complete, but as for the body, I have tried model after model, but all are too clumsy or too slender—not one has that perfection of proportion that I imagine must be yours.”

“Why do you not employ your imagination, Master Leonardo, and your wonderful knowledge of anatomy?”

“So I have, but therein also have I failed. Come, Madonna, and look at these drawings. Here are all my attempts.”

As she looked at them she was silent, and her look grew even more thoughtful. She lingered for a long time over them, and finally, as she laid the last one aside, she laughed a short, strange laugh, and said:

“You are right, Master. None of these will do. Only one person can help you. Send Salai away to-morrow.” And having called her nurse she departed quickly.

III

THE CAVERN

THE next day I sent Salai away on a mission which would employ him till evening, and gave word to my servants that I was not to be disturbed on any pretense. In the afternoon she came alone, attired in a long cloak with a hood that covered her head. As she entered she said briefly:

“Have you everything ready, Master?”

“Yes, Madonna.”

She seated herself in the accustomed spot, waited till I had taken my place at the easel, then threw back her cloak and the upper part of her loose robe and said:

“Go to work.”

I took the crayon and began, but my hand trembled. It was poor work I knew, but it was my only chance to record the truth, and I did as well as I could. For a time we were both silent—her eyes had a fixed look. At last she spoke:

“Do not put my face upon it, Master.”

“I do not intend to draw any face.”

“No, I do not like that. I hate headless things like the statues they find in the earth. It seems like death—death by the axe. My body must live. You must invent a face.”

“Certainly, Madonna.”

“What will it be like?”

“A smiling woman, proud, condescending, —self-satisfied, because she knows she is so beautiful.”

“That will not be like me.”

“For that reason I shall make it especially self-satisfied, since you are never satisfied, but always longing, and longing for some new experience, some further insight.”

She made no answer, and we were silent for a long time. Her face grew more and more thoughtful, even melancholy. And yet it had a new charm, an effect unlike any I had seen before, so that I could with difficulty work on the figure and not endeavor to fix that thoughtful, melancholy face on my paper. Finally she spoke softly and slowly as if waking from a dream:

“Tell me one of your stories, Master. Nothing witty and nothing horrible, but

something from your own life. Something that is fitting.”

I related the following: “Once, driven by my greedy desire, I travelled to Mongibello to see the great and various and strange forms made by *artificiosa natura*; and, having wandered some distance among the gloomy rocks, I came to the entrance of a great cavern, in front of which I stood some time, for I was astonished, not having expected to find such a thing. Then, bending my back into an arch, I rested my left hand on my knee, and held my right hand over my downcast and contracted eyebrows, often bending first one way and then the other to see if I could discover anything within. But this being forbidden by the deep darkness of the cavern, after I had remained there some time, two contrary emotions arose in me—fear and desire—fear of the threatening, dark cavern, desire to see whether there were any miraculous thing within.”

There I ceased, half expecting that she would ask me to continue, but she, on the contrary, remained silent and thoughtful. At last, when she saw that I had finished my

drawing, having readjusted her robe and covered her head with the hood of her cloak and without even glancing at my work, she left the house. I accompanied her, for it was growing dark, but we spoke no word on the way. At her door she turned to me and asked:

“Master, can you escape from that cavern?”

“I do not know.”

And then she entered the house, leaving me alone.

IV

THE FLESH OF WOMAN

THAT night I could not sleep. I tossed about endeavoring to meditate upon other pictures that I had in mind, or upon certain problems in mathematics and mechanics, but it was in vain. Before my mind was ever that vision of her fair body surmounted by her thoughtful face and her mysterious eyes. The vision seemed more distinct, more real than the actuality had been some hours before, for then my eyes had been as though blinded by a rosy mist. At length I arose, and striking a light, I took a fresh leaf of paper and drew with much exactness the vivid vision before me. When it was completed, just as the grey dawn appeared, I retired to bed, and, being much exhausted, slept until far into the day.¹

O flesh of woman, of the woman who is be-

¹ This drawing must be the one which is now in the Condé Museum at Chantilly.

loved! how thou dost confuse the mind and even the soul of man! With thy warm glow thou comest between him and the pure light of knowledge that shines from heaven. Like the mist at dawn thou veilest all things so that he cannot see them in their truth, and therefore, enfolded in an iridescent cloud, he often wanders about until he has lost forever the true way. And yet, of all God-created things, thou art among the most beautiful, and, being created of God, thou art not wholly evil. Through thee man may ascend into Heaven or descend into Hell. But, how, O thou, our Creator, the Prime Mover of all things, is thy creature to know the true way? . . .

When I awoke from sleep I felt myself much refreshed, and my mind clear. Then, taking my drawing, I sat down before the portrait and with a sure hand made such alterations as were necessary to bring the figure into perfect harmony with the face and hands.

The portrait was now almost completed. To the ordinary observer it would be a perfect likeness, to me some further work was needed to express in her features what was

in the soul within, unseen by all but me. Still it seemed best that the portrait should wait until we had both returned to Florence, for at this time my hand, disturbed by the promptings of the flesh, could not accomplish what was needed to make the portrait worthy of her.

Therefore I sent word by Salai, that it would be well for her not to come again until she should have returned from Naples, by which voyage I hoped that her health, for some time failing, might be fully established. She sent back a reply by the youth, saying I had decided rightly, since at the present time she did not feel that she was able to bear the fatigue of any more sittings, but she expected to see me again before she left Florence, which was to be in a few days.

Salai was much distressed when he thus learned of her approaching departure, for she had not spoken of it to him before. I then told him of my purpose to take him with me to Rome, where he would not only have new scenes and new people to distract his mind, but would be in reality much nearer the object of his adoration. Yet none of us knew that the last sitting for the portrait

had been that one when she had come alone, though indeed I was destined to paint once more upon it with the vision of her soul before my eyes.

V

THE BANQUET

THE night before Madonna Lisa left Florence, Messer Francesco gave a banquet, and at his wish I was present. There were many of the chief men of the city at the table with their wives, resplendent in costly robes, eating largely of the rich food set before them. I listened wearily to their chatter, saying but little myself, for the things they talked of were of small interest to me. I could also see that the face of Madonna Lisa had a tired look, and that the smile with which she at times endeavored to cover her weariness was not in anything like the radiance that had so often beamed upon me while I was painting.

As I looked and listened I could not help thinking that gross men of commonplace habits and of little power of reasoning and discourse do not merit such a beautiful instrument as the body, nor so great a variety

of delicate adjustments as do thinking men and those of great power of expression, but they need only a sack wherein they may receive food and whence it may issue; that in truth they ought not to be judged otherwise than as passageways for food, because they do not appear to me to participate in any way with the human species otherwise than in the voice and form, while as to all the rest they fall even below the beasts.

I also wondered how Messer Francesco, honest man though he was, had succeeded in winning and holding the love of Madonna Lisa, seeing that he was in every way ignorant of what was highest and best in her—namely her soul, which he could never understand, having neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor mind fit to receive what part of her perfect soul she might choose to reveal.

While the banquet was going on there was music, which few of the company heard, because of their talk about common things, and because of the rattle and clatter of knives upon platters. But when all had well filled their sacks with food, the company withdrew into another hall, the musicians played a merrier strain, and some of the

younger folk began to dance. Then I—feeling utterly weary and thinking how that men would toil and struggle and defraud each other for the sake of obtaining nothing more than this, which must soon pass away and was even now becoming filth and corruption—withdraw by myself, and, coming to a little terrace that overhung the garden in the inner court, I gazed upon the full moon, which was pouring the reflected light of the sun down upon the earth.

How long I stood there I know not, but suddenly I heard a step behind me, and, turning, I saw Madonna Lisa. There was a mysterious look in her eyes as she came out into the moonbeams, and with a choking voice she said:

“You seem sad, Master.”

“Yes, Madonna, I am sad and weary. Life is sometimes hard.”

“You will miss me when I am gone and come no more to your studio?”

“Yes, Madonna, I shall miss you.”

“And you will be glad when I return?”

“I shall be very glad.”

After this we said no more for a little space, but listened to the music, which

sounded faintly from within. And then her body swayed toward me, but as I in amazement stood motionless, she drew back quickly, trembling. A moment after the hot blood sped outward from my heart—I bent toward her, and once more she swayed forward to me, and her lips met mine. . . .

VI

THE LETTERS

Leonardo to Lisa.

. . . IN you, my beloved, I have not only found the woman soul that I searched for so long, but I have also found my own soul, which had lain hidden these many years. For drawn by you I have entered that threatening cavern and there I have found the miraculous thing I desired—but did not know and even feared—love. Love that has raised my soul out of the obscure depths to meet your soul—at first half dreaming, half awake, then aroused into full life by the touch of your lips upon mine. The tremulous rhythm of your kiss still vibrates within me. That kiss from your lips drew my soul to yours as the smiling warmth of the sun draws the vapors from the sea up into the heavens, there to float, illuminated and adorned with wondrous colors by the

same sun. And, moreover, in other days you seem to me like unto the sun, which is the only source of light and heat in the universe, and from which descend all the souls of men, since the warmth in living bodies comes from the soul; so from you, my sun, my warmth, my light, from you has descended into my cold body a new soul—the old soul being dead—and now I live again with a new life, that with all my studies, all my observations and experiments, I had never imagined. And with this new soul I am alive as I have never been before.—And this you have done by your kiss. . . .

Lisa to Leonardo.

. . . Since I have been here. It is impossible to tell you, my Leonardo, how I miss you, how I need you. Now all the days are long and tedious. I start up, thinking that it is time for me to sit in front of that dark wall under the curtain, and to have your eyes search deep into my soul, finding there many, many things no one else ever considered worthy to search for or indeed ever dreamed of. . . . Your eyes are so different from

those of other men. It has ever been easy for me to read the eyes of the men I knew, easy to see the desire that flashed up the moment I glanced into them. But as I gazed and gazed into your eyes, my beloved, day after day, I saw in them desire indeed—eager, greedy desire—but it was not the desire that glitters in other men's eyes—desire for the things that pass away in corruption—it was a calm, infinite, yes, appalling desire for me, myself, the real me that we are told is eternal. Yes, my Leonardo, it almost appalled me at first. As the old Zingara truly said, I was filled with fear of you, because I did not understand your gaze and yet felt its enthralling influence. I thought of tales I had heard of the basilisk, of the evil eye, of the black art, and as I felt your gaze take possession of me, body and soul, I trembled. Often, when I had left your house and was free from the obsession of your eyes, free from their mysterious power, I would resolve that I would never return, feeling that in the end I should pay a price too great even for a portrait by Leonardo. Yet when Salai would appear with the word that you were ready to paint if I were pleased to

come, I would hasten as much as was seemly in order to lose no moment.

But as time passed I came to know somewhat of the meaning of your eyes, and then I began to love them; for as you have told me, love is the child of knowledge. And then I also perceived that you yourself did not understand your own power; for your soul, with its infinite desire that shines so steadily from your deep eyes, is like the *artificiosa natura* you so love to talk about—all creating, all developing, all enfolding, all cherishing, and yet unconscious of its powers and achievements. Men imagine all manner of strange things about you—even as I did in the beginning—because they do not know you, because they cannot know you; but I, who am now beginning to know you, love you, and the more I shall know you, my beloved, the more I shall love you. But shall I be able to satisfy that infinite desire that glows so steadily in your eyes? . . .

Leonardo to Lisa.

. . . The lover is moved through the beloved as are the senses by the objects per-

ceived—as the magnet and the steel by each other—and they unite and make one single thing. The . . . is the first thing which is born of this union. If the beloved is vile the lover makes himself vile. When the being which is united is fitted for that with which it is united, then follows delectation and pleasure and satisfaction. When the lover is joined to his beloved, there he reposes—when the weight is placed in position, there it reposes. The things known by our intellect . . .

Lisa to Leonardo.

. . . Tell me, my wise Leonardo, how I, one poor, little woman, can love you—three? . . . I love Francesco, not only from duty, because we are united by the holy sacrament, but from inclination, because he has always been so good to me, so indulgent, so patient with my caprices, so tolerant of my wayward thoughts—even though he does not comprehend them—and always so affectionate and true. And then I love Salai, that beautiful youth so full of sunshine, whom you love so well that indeed I need not tell you why I love him. And, last, I

love you,—you, the mighty Leonardo,—why? Simply because a power stronger than I, stronger than you—for you too resisted long—has drawn us together,—a power like unto the attraction of the magnet and the steel for each other. You made no effort to win me, nor did I try to win you. But though I made no effort—though you never even dreamed of making one—yet that power, mysterious—no, simple like one of the forces of *artificiosa natura*, drew us together, till even you, with all your abstract thought and endless study, began to feel it, as I had felt it from the first. When you told me that story of the cavern, I knew it must come, and so . . . I began to fear even as you had feared before that dark cavern—I, too, was torn by fear and desire. But when Francesco said he wished you to be present that night, I knew it could not be prevented and said to myself, I have done nothing to bring this about—it is fate—I cannot resist. And when I saw you at table, wearied by the empty talk and the silly laughter, I knew how it would come. And you, my beloved Leonardo, know how it came. —Was it you or was it I? It was neither,

nor was it both. The magnet and the steel do nothing: it is, even as you have told me, the force of nature that brings them together—that brought us together. And now . . . perfection . . .

And yet I sometimes feel that I may be sinning in loving more than one. I fear that this love of ours, with all its beauty and perfection may yet bring evil to us and to those we love. Will not jealousy arise? and from jealousy, hatred and strife and . . . Are you not a little jealous of Francesco? of Salai? I know that Salai, poor boy, is jealous of Francesco and of you—you whom he loves so much—because he knows how small he is in comparison with his master. And Francesco, too, would be jealous of you both, if he were not so involved in his commerce and in the affairs of Florence, that he has but little time to think of his household, of his wife, except when she thrusts herself upon him—and then I must perforce say he does all that any woman should expect. Tell me, my wise Leonardo, how am I to divide myself into three Lisas, and yet remain myself, my true self, the Lisa that loves Leonardo?

Leonardo to Lisa.

True love, my beloved, is not like silver and gold or earthly possessions in that what you give to one you must fain keep away from another; but it is like divine knowledge, like celestial wisdom, in that the more of it you give away the more you will have to give and that in fuller measure. If you love truly—not with mere earthly desire, but with celestial fervor—you will find that the more you love your husband, the more you will be able to love Drea, the more you will be able to love me, the more you will be able to love all mankind: you will love as the Great Prime Mover and Creator must love, without limits, without withholding—not loving all in the same way, but giving to each what is fitting and necessary to him. I would not have the love you should give Francesco, nor the affection which Drea's beauty and sweetness awakens in your heart, for neither would be adequate to that infinite desire which you so truly say you see in my eyes. One love should not take from another, but each should strengthen, should deepen the other; even as the stars move in harmony in

the heavens, so should these loves move in harmony in your soul.

As for jealousy, such a monstrous thought never entered the mind of Leonardo. There is no insanity so senseless as jealousy, which destroys the very thing it would preserve—love. Jealousy arises only when love is imperfect, is limited, and therefore—not being able to behold, to comprehend, the infinity of true love—desires to limit the beloved by its own limitations, its own imperfections. But the lover who loves with celestial love, which is infinite, knows that he himself is finite, and so may in many ways fail to satisfy all the nature of his beloved. Therefore he rejoices at the love which his beloved lavishes upon another, knowing that, as all powers grow stronger by being employed, the true celestial love which his beloved gives him will thus become greater and greater, and in truth will have no limit, no end.

No true lover will place limits upon his beloved, or will make rules to regulate her conduct, to take away her liberty; for where there is liberty there is no rule, no limitation, and only in perfect liberty can the true celes-

tial love exist—the love of one free soul for another free soul. And this, my beloved, I deem to be the nature of our love, and may our Creator grant that it may never change or be limited by mere earthly desire or hellish jealousy. For my part I cannot see how . . .

Lisa to Leonardo.

You may remember, my beloved wise man, that I once said to you: “Do not discover, if your liberty is dear to you. My face is the prison of love.” Since I have read your letter I have often thought of those words and of what was in my mind when I said them. Some day I shall tell you, when we are close together, and I can look into your eyes, and mayhap if the touch of your lips unlock my heart. Meanwhile, think of them, my wise Leonardo. You may tell me your thought if you choose. . . .

I feel, as I have always felt that I am not as great as you, that I can never become as great. It is true that jealousy is insanity, it is true that it destroys the very thing it desires to preserve—but could I bear to see you love another woman?—I do not know.

Perhaps, under the influence of your celestial love, nay, of *our* celestial love, I may grow as great as you, or so great at least as to be above jealousy, and be able to bless the love of Leonardo for another woman. Perhaps—perhaps—But now I pray I may be spared that trial. I want no spot on the perfection of our love. . . .

Leonardo to Lisa.

[At Rome.] I am, my beloved, very busy inspecting the fortifications of the city, drawing up plans for fortresses and siege works. Not once have I touched brush or pencil; for the Most High Pontiff could gain the consent of the Signory to my coming only on the condition of my not painting, since they are most desirous that I should finish the battle picture. Thus I am engaged entirely on things of utility and not of beauty—were it not that I have your face with its subtle smile to dream of, that I have our celestial love to raise me from earth to heaven. For there is very little of heaven here, except in the words of the mass—the chanting of which is a veritable mockery, with the Most Holy Father, the vice-gerent

on earth of the Prince of Peace, selling his Lord for coin in order to carry on war, to win lands and fortresses, and to slay the bodies of men, whose souls he is supposed to save. While in place of the simple fishermen, clad in poor raiment, who followed our Lord Christ when He was upon earth, you can see only dissolute cardinals and bishops, clad in silk and gold and jewels, trafficking for place and power with gold and lies, or spending the revenues of Holy Church on debauched women of the town or blasphemous men-at-arms. You recall the story in the Decameron of the converted Jew, who *would* go to Rome in spite of all that the simple Christian who had converted him could do to prevent it, and how he returned, strengthened in his faith, because the Church of Christ persisted in spite of its ministers. . . . But this does not disturb me, as it did poor Fra Girolamo Savonarola, or as it does Messer Michel Angelo.—I only smile as I think of the pride of little men, who, because they seem to rule others deem themselves great and powerful; when neither prince nor prelate can by all his armies, fortresses, dungeons, chains, or instruments of

torture, rule one other single free soul, or take away from him the only true liberty, the liberty of thought.—As for me, I have the perfect liberty of our celestial love, and why should the doings of popes or emperors, despots or petty seignories trouble me? . . .

There are many learned men here, and I have had a little pleasure in their company, but not much. As the men of the world from pope to gonfalonier care only for practical results and not for the causes, the laws by which *artificiosa natura* produces them, so these learned men care more for words, than for the truths that can be expressed by words. They are men of great memory and can quote Plato and Aristotle and Ptolemy and St. Thomas with astonishing volubility and aptness. But the most enlightened of them consider my researches as a waste of valuable time, which might be spent in painting, and the stupid ones are sure that I am dabbling in such false sciences as alchemy or astrology or even the black art and have dealings with spirits. Yet, why should I care! I can well afford to smile at their ignorance.—No, mayhap they are not so ignorant, for

I do have dealings with a spirit, the spirit of our celestial love, which brings you to me even though many leagues away, so that I feel you near me all the waking hours as well as in dreams,—and this same spirit, far more powerful than any that foolish folk believe can be raised by necromancy, raises me into the third heaven, where, like Saint Paul, I see and hear things that are unlawful for me to tell. And so, my beloved . . .

Lisa to Leonardo.

. . . And I see clearly the truth of what you say, namely, that “you must give full liberty to others if you would possess liberty yourself.” It is even as clear and simple as that saying of our Lord Christ: “Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.” In truth it is but a single application of that rule. But, do you know, my wise man, even because it is so simple it is so difficult—at least to those who live in this complicated world, where so many conflicting things beset them at once. It is easy for children, because their natures are simple,—and I also know it is written, “Unless ye become as one of these little ones ye cannot

enter into the kingdom of Heaven." But, Leonardo, my beloved, it is so difficult, when you know you have power over another, to refrain from using it—if only to discover how great that power may be—to make an experiment. You recall how often you have told me that one must make experiments to discover the truth of anything—and may not experiments be necessary for me to find out the full extent of my power? . . .

And I wore a dress of white *tabi* brocaded with gold, and closely fitting sleeves of gold brocade; my necklace was of large pearls, my hair was bound in a gold net studded with pearls, my slippers were of white silk embroidered with gold and pearls, and my mantle was of brown velvet trimmed with marten fur. Many ladies as well as cavaliers gathered about me. . . . And, my beloved wise man, could I help feeling and knowing my power? Was it possible to refrain from using it? In truth I will confess I made several experiments. My beloved Leonardo, who adores liberty so much, will not, I know, grudge his Lisa a little liberty to indulge her caprices, to find some amusement in the sighs of lan-

guishing swains. . . . And the Great Captain came to me after the *pavane* and said that my dancing was more than mortal, since I could surpass Terpsichore herself. . . . Indeed while the festivities continued I enjoyed my little reign of glory; but when, in the early dawn, I laid myself down on my bed, my thoughts flew north to the Umbrian hills, where you are now on your way back to our dear Florence—that city where I first really began to live, and where I long to be so that I may live again in your presence. All my liberty, all my triumphs, all this empty or evil admiration, would I gladly give for one hour with you, my Leonardo, my beloved, when I could bind my arms about your dear neck like a chain and deprive you as well as myself of that liberty, which is far more grievous than slavery—since we are apart. But it will not be long. In the early spring I shall return—and then, my beloved, . . .

Leonardo to Lisa.

[Again at Florence.] . . . I sit and gaze at your portrait every day. Imperfect as it is, it brings you, my beloved, near me,

and my memory supplies what the picture lacks. I see your bosom rise and fall, your eyes fill with celestial light, and on your lips hovers your ineffable smile. But I do not take up my brush, fearing to work without the inspiration of your presence; for I do not wish your portrait to be a product of my imagination, but your very self—and nothing can be more perfect than that. When you return, the first thing must be to finish your portrait. Then with that completed, I may be able to resume work on the battle picture, for which the Gonfalonier grows more and more impatient. . . . Come, my beloved, come. . . .

Last night I was singing softly to my lute, and these words from among those I sang have remained in my memory. They are very simple and even crude—being but an improvisation—but I shall make no effort to improve them, sending them to you even as they came to me:

My heart it wears a wondrous chain,
That leads, my love, to thee,
And binds me fast in thy dear love,
Wherever I may be.

And, though it be a golden chain,
Its links are strong as steel;
But I, within it fettered fast,
The truest freedom feel.

For my own soul has forged this chain,
Each link a thought of thee,
And every link is welded firm
By thy dear thoughts of me.

Yet this strange chain is light as air,
'Twould vanish with a breath
Of doubt or fear. Ah! may it last,
And bind us, love, in death.

VII

AT THE VILLA

WHEN Madonna Lisa returned from Naples, on the first of May, 1506, she did not come home to Florence, but tarried in the Giocondo villa, on the slopes of Vallambrosa, a little beyond Sant' Ellero. There Messer Francesco had met her as she came down from Arezzo, and, as it was unseasonably warm and unhealthy in Florence, and as she, moreover, was somewhat ill and much worn from her journey, he persuaded her to remain in that elevated and salubrious spot until either she should recover her strength, or until the weather in Florence should grow cooler.

She sent me, however, the following letter by the hand of Messer Francesco, who brought it to me at Fiesole, where I was with my Uncle Ambrogio, studying geometry and the flight of birds, because at that time I could not endure to use the brush:

“Beloved Master Leonardo: I hope in a few days to be able to go on to Florence and to see you and my other friends again after this long absence. I charge you to have everything prepared, so that when I shall arrive we may be able at once to work on the portrait; for indeed I have set my heart upon having it finished in time for my husband’s birthday. And, moreover, I pray you, for the love you bear me, to send me Salai with your lute, in order that he may cheer up my sad spirit, and comfort me with his music.”

With Salai I sent a brief reply in which I wrote that she must avoid physicians and drugs and damp, and must keep her mind as cheerful and gay as possible, to aid which purpose I was certain no one was so well fitted as Salai—who indeed was almost beside himself with joy at the prospect of seeing his lady before his master did. . . . I returned to Florence, where I was very lonely, although my house was filled with servants and pupils. I put the little court in order with my own hands, not suffering anyone but myself to touch anything. And, as I brought out the portrait and placed it

upon the easel, I mused upon what would be her home coming.

A few days later, Messer Francesco—who indeed rode frequently back and forth between the city and his villa—came to me and begged that I would go with him to Vallambrosa and bring Madonna Lisa's picture and my colors; since she had so set her heart upon having the portrait completed that he feared lest her recovery might be retarded if her wish were not granted. He said, moreover, that, being exceedingly desirous, she had already caused laborers to go to work upon a small court in the villa, in order that it might be as nearly as possible like unto the one in my house. He knew this was a great thing to ask, seeing that I had refused a similar favor to the Marchioness of Mantua, but he entreated me by the love I bore him and Madonna Lisa to grant his prayer.

He was much surprised when I agreed to go as soon as I could make the necessary preparations. But I told him that it was one thing to refuse a great lady, who merely wished to possess a picture by Leonardo Vencio, and another to deny a sick woman the gratification of a harmless desire.

I got all things ready as rapidly as was possible, wondering meanwhile how my lady would appear after her long absence, and whether her illness had changed her in any marked degree, but resolved at all events to bring the portrait speedily to what might be called completion in order that her desire should be fulfilled.

On the morrow, shortly after midday, I started with Messer Francesco, he having sent forward the night before a servant with the news of our coming, and in due time we arrived at the villa. My lady accompanied by Salai was at the gate to greet us, for she had seen us afar off as we were coming up the mountain. She was somewhat thinner, and her face was for the most part very pale, but there was a bright flush upon her cheeks, and, moreover, her eyes seemed exceedingly large and bright. When I alighted from my horse she extended her hand, and, as I took it to raise it to my lips, she pressed her fingers lightly upon mine. Then she said smiling:

“Welcome, Master Leonardo. I thank you much for coming with such speed. Francesco,” she continued, turning to her

husband, "I am feeling much better in health to-day. This fresh air of the mountains and Salai's music have already done much for my spirits. And now, with the Master to finish my portrait and to amuse me with his stories, it will not be long before I shall be fully recovered." Then turning to me she said, "Though Salai and I have urged on the workmen with all our power to-day, the court is not yet ready. But happily this is not so great a misfortune, as you will now be able to superintend the work yourself, and have it finished to your mind."

After going to look at the court, on which indeed much progress had been made, and charging the workmen to return the next day at an early hour, as the sun was now near its setting, we went in to dinner.

During and after the meal my lady was so light hearted and gay that Master Francesco laughed and said:

"Is it not true, Master Leonardo, that the only thing needed to restore an ailing woman to health is to give her her will, and that the sure way to kill her is to deny it unto her?"

To this I assented, seeing that my lady did not seem to take it amiss, but added:

“Yet in the case of Madonna Lisa, there is a great difference, inasmuch as she wills only good and profitable things, while for the greater part of womankind, their wills are perverse, and to indulge them often leads to their bane and even destruction.”

“You speak truly,” said Master Francesco, “for you must always make an exception in the case of Lisa. She is indeed wise beyond the nature of womankind.”

“Certainly,” I added, “she is not to be compared with other women.” And looking at my lady I saw that she understood.

She amused us, moreover, with descriptions of the stately Spanish grandees, who now rule in Naples, and of the severe and solemn manners and customs that prevail among them and how they appear when compared with the gay and frivolous Neapolitans. Many comic anecdotes she also told us concerning the people she had met, which caused Messer Francesco and me to laugh until the tears came into our eyes. And I remember that one of her stories was as follows:

“A fair lady desired a certain Spanish cavalier to dance with her, and, on his refusal,

offered him music and other entertainments; but he proudly declared that such trifles were not his profession. At last she asked him: 'What is then your profession, Signore?' With a frown he replied, 'To fight.' Then said the lady: 'Seeing that you are not now in war, nor in any place to fight, I marvel that you do not have yourself and your harness greased and hung up with other implements of war in an armory, lest you should become even more rusty than you are now.' "

My lady then made me tell of the state of affairs in Rome and of the manner in which the Church is now managed, and much did Messer Francesco laugh—especially when I told them how a witty Roman said, that Venus had reigned in the City of Saint Peter with the Borgia, and now Mars ruled with the Rovere, and the good Lord only knew what pagan deity would come to rule them when Julius passed away.

All the time, however, I noticed that Salai, who stood near my lady, remained with a woe-begone countenance. This made me resolve to call him to account for his melancholy, since this was by no means fitting for

one who had been sent to cheer and comfort the failing spirits of my lady.

After she had retired to rest, Messer Francesco talked long with me about the threatening state of affairs in Italy, which was much exercising the minds of the Signory and of the Gonfalonier. There were not only rumors, but even strong proofs of an agreement between the Catholic King, the Most Christian King, the Roman Emperor, and the Most High Pontiff to despoil Venice. If this were true Florence would be obliged to join in the league. And though he could not lament any misfortunes that might befall greedy and grasping Venice, he feared that in the future Florence might suffer the same fate. "It was an evil day for Italy," he said, "when Duke Ludovico called in the barbarians; and though it had been by their assistance that we regained our liberty, yet our riches, and the beauty and the glory of our city were so great, and the . . ."

VIII

IN THE LOGGIA

DURING the last day I superintended the workmen in the preparation of the court, while my lady sat by with Messer Francesco, and in the pauses of the work made us merry with her lively stories and witty sayings. About the middle of the afternoon there came a messenger from the Gonfalonier requiring the immediate presence of Messer Francesco. He was soon ready to set forth, and, as he mounted his horse, said to my lady, who stood near by:

“I cannot say when I shall be able to return, but, with Salai to play the lute and to sing for you, with Master Leonardo to paint your portrait and to amuse you with his merry tales, and, above all, with your husband absent in Florence, your complete recovery should be sure and speedy. I shall expect to see another Lisa when I return.”

"In truth you will," she replied, answering his laugh with a merry smile.

"And I shall endeavor with all my power to keep Madonna from grieving over your absence," I added, joining in his laughter. Salai, however, did not laugh, and his brow grew darker than before.

So Messer Francesco rode away, and we returned to the house. But with his departure the lightsome spirit that had ruled us all day departed also. My lady spoke rarely, and then quietly and with but few words. And, after watching the progress of the work in the court for a while, she retired to her own room, saying that she sorely needed rest as she had slept but little the preceding night. I then urged on the work bravely, so that everything was finished before it was time for the laborers to depart. For I felt that if the painting were not resumed the following day my lady's melancholy would surely return. There was something in the expression of her eyes that I did not understand at that time, but I considered that her illness was likely to return with added force because of her unwonted gayety since my arrival.

But when she appeared at the evening

meal, her eyes were once more glowing, and her spirits were merrier than before. She talked almost incessantly, flitting from one thing to another,—only occasionally desiring me to speak. When the platters were removed she called upon Salai to sing for her, and to sing only my songs. He indeed complied, but sang so badly that she soon sent him away, and when he had gone she asked me to take the lute, and said:

“My Leonardo, I know that you do not wish to sing; but, ever since you sent me those verses about the chain, I have longed to hear the melody to which you sang them, so that when I am alone I may be able to sing them to myself. You will not refuse me this little favor, my Leonardo?”

“I can refuse nothing to my Lisa,” I answered. Then taking the lute I tuned it to the proper mode and sang the verses very softly so that there should be no harsh tones.

When I had ended she asked me to repeat it, and as I sang she sang with me, for she knew the words, and truly it was very beautiful.

It was now evening, and, saying that it was

stifling within, she led me by the hand out into the loggia, which commanded a view of the country beneath us extending down the valley of Arno towards Florence, a view that lost itself in subtle lights and shadows, for the moon, now in its first quarter, was slowly sinking toward the western hills.

We sat side by side on a great stone bench, and for a time silently gazed upon the landscape, my lady still holding my hand. I felt that some strange power choked my utterance, and mayhap the same thing was true of her. At length she turned to me and spoke:

“Leonardo, my love, when I was far away from you in Naples, I longed for nothing so much as to be with you, to tell you many things that troubled my mind but of which I could not write, and to hear your dear voice in your wise replies. But now that we are together—alone—I desire only silence. I desire only to feel you near me.—Yet if you—”

“No, my Lisa, the hour is not for words. I also desire silence—and your presence.”

So we spoke no more, and, not daring to look into each other's eyes, we gazed down into the valley or into the heavens with the

sinking moon and the few large stars. From time to time my lady pressed my hand tremulously and my fingers closed upon hers. Truly there was no need for speech in that holy hour.

The moon sank lower and lower. At last it was hidden behind the crest of a distant hill, while the sky above it glowed with a golden light, and two little specks of clouds glittered for a space like silver stars. Then the golden light faded away; it grew very dark. I felt the clasp of my lady's hand tighten, and her other hand stole softly to my neck. I drew her closer till I felt her warm breath upon my face and her trembling lips laid softly upon mine, drawing my very soul into her own.

How long we remained thus I know not, but suddenly it seemed as though I were wrapped in a consuming flame. I clasped her closely to my breast, my lips pressed hard on hers, and I felt her heart beating fast against mine. Then I strove to draw her still closer. For a moment she yielded. But suddenly she became rigid; then shivered away from out my arms. I could see her shadowy figure in the dim starlight stand-

ing before me, her hands pressed upon her breast.

“You!—Leonardo!—you!” she cried in horror.

“I—thought—you—called me,” I stammered. But made no movement, for I was as though I had seen the head of Medusa.

“Oh!” she moaned, and then fled swiftly within.

IX

DARKNESS AND FLIGHT

AFTER my lady had left me, I sat for a time motionless. That thing, against which I had guarded myself for years, had happened. The flesh had for an instant overpowered the spirit, and had gained its brief supremacy in a moment of the loftiest exaltation—so lofty that all restraint had been forgotten. True is the saying, “Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” At first there was anger in my heart because, after having tempted me by her caresses, she had so suddenly repulsed me. But then, as I sat there in the darkness, and the night breeze cooled my face, I was thankful that my lady had been able to save herself even at the last moment. For our love was a love of the spirit, and to submerge it beneath the flood of animal passion would destroy it forever or make it like the common loves of common men, only fit to abide in

mud and filth. The love of woman when it is an inspiration raises you to the highest heaven, but when its end is only self gratification it sinks you to the lowest hell. Unless you restrain your passions you are like the beasts, for then you have laid aside your reason which is all that distinguishes you from them.

When I had regained control of myself, I considered what might be the best thing to do. I feared to meet my lady, lest one look from her eyes, one touch from her hand should bring me grovelling to her feet like the foolish lovers I had always held in contempt. Or mayhap I might draw her again to me, and she be unable to save herself a second time. It seemed best to me on this account, that I should leave that place and remain away from my lady until we were both so certain of ourselves that nothing unpremeditated could befall us. For that which you do after calm deliberation is your own act, the act of your true self, of your true spirit, because it is the result of reason; but that which is done from sudden passion is but the act of your body, and, as your spirit has created the body for its instru-

ment, it is not meet that the instrument should rule its maker.

Therefore I went into the house, and having awakened Salai, bade him saddle my horse. At the gate I charged him to tell my lady that I had returned to Florence and from there would write unto her.

And as I rode onward with slackened rein, letting my horse find his own way through the darkness, my mind continued to meditate upon what had befallen. Though at first my heart again grew hot with anger toward my lady because she had tempted me by her caresses, yet soon the flush of rage once more passed away, and, in its place, came a cold and bitter contempt of my own self, in that I, who had deemed myself as it were a pilot to guide her awakening soul into the calm havens of the intellect and into the celestial regions of the spirit, had foolishly and blindly permitted myself to drift with her, enveloped in the rosy mist of her bodily sweetness, until shipwreck had befallen both of us and our celestial love, now likely to drown in the bitter waters of . . .

Was it true then that the love of the soul was not to be achieved by mortal men and

women, and that the celestial heights were not to be attained by beings held down to earth through their animal bodies and suffocated by the seething passions that arise therefrom? Was it true that there was no woman soul, or, if there were, that it could not be revealed to man because of fleshly barriers? Was celestial love but an empty dream of philosophers, poets, and fools? And as these thoughts pursued each other through the tangled forest of my mind, I became almost beside myself with doubt and despair.

But as I drew near the city, and the dawn stole down the valley, the light of reason began to dawn once more within my soul, and I remembered that I worshipped the wonderful justice of the great Prime Mover, because He does not wish that any force or potency should fail in the order and quality of its natural effects, whether they be good or evil. Therefore it was irrational for me to continue being angry with my lady or even with myself; since, of a truth, our souls, being in the image of our Creator and therefore free, were able to choose that this, which had befallen us, should be the means of raising us

to still loftier heights as well as of sinking us to darker depths.

Then a great calm came over me, and, with the first ray of the sunrise that flashed upon the city, it seemed as though my lady smiled on me.

When I reached my house I took pen and paper and wrote:

“Had I not been Leonardo, or had I been younger by twenty years, I might have remained with you; but as I am Leonardo, and have seen more than fifty winters, I have gone away. I have done this because of the great love I bear you, and I know you will understand.”

This I sent immediately by Tommaso, charging him to deliver it into the hands of no one but my lady.

X

A SPIRIT IN PRISON

TOMMASO returned that same day, bringing with him the portrait and the following letter:

“When I had left you, my beloved, I went to my room, but was not able to sleep. I tossed about feverishly, crying to myself, ‘Leonardo, Leonardo, you with your celestial spirit and your face like a god, you are the one thing in the world that I need, and yet I—who have lived my highest life through you—have repulsed you! And I seemed utterly low and vile in my eyes, unworthy that you, with your celestial spirit and god-like eyes, should deign to look upon me. Then the image of Francesco, to whom I am bound in duty and by a blessed sacrament, rose before me, and made me seem still more vile. But again in my wicked heart would arise the longing for you, with your face like a god, and again I would cry: ‘Leonardo, my

own Leonardo, my Lion, what have I done to you!—I who love you beyond earth and heaven!’ At length, unable to bear the torment longer, I arose and wandered about the house like a distracted spirit, fit for neither heaven nor hell. As I passed your room I looked within, the door being open, and saw you were not there. I entered—why, I know not—and went to the open window. I heard voices below at the gate. I recognized your dear voice and that of Salai. I leaned out trying to distinguish what you were saying, for a sudden chill swept over me and a strange fear.—Then I heard the clatter of horse hoofs, and I knew you were gone. In my despair I cried aloud, ‘Leonardo, Leonardo, do not leave me!’ You did not hear,—but Salai heard—

“Beloved, beloved Leonardo, I had written thus far when Tommaso arrived with your brief message. I know the great love you bear me—would I were worthy of it!—and I also understand why you went away, and why you wrote as you have written. I have kissed the dear words over and over again, and my tears have almost blotted them out. But was it for the best? God knows. I can

only weep. Shall we ever again be to each other what we have been in the time that is past—so long past that it seems centuries ago? Can we ever—? I cannot tell. For, after you, my beloved, my protector, had gone away, something befell me—something unspeakable—and I am no more the same Lisa—the Lisa that you loved. I cannot write it. No, no, no!—Mayhap some time—if we see each other again, and I am sure that you still love me,—I may be able to tell you, and you to understand—you, who understand everything—except a woman. You with the face of a god—

“But I must write no more, or I shall go mad. My brain seems whirling around like the lost souls in the *Inferno*—those souls who died for love—do you recall them, Leonardo, my Leonardo?

“I send back the portrait by Tommaso—that fatal portrait!—for I know that now you cannot return here,—and—even if you could return, you would not find the same Lisa you have been painting so long. Mayhap some day I may by your help be myself again, and then—May God forgive me now, and may He bless you, my beloved, forever

and ever, and never let you lose your love for your Lisa.”

When I had read this I pondered long, if perchance I might discover what thing could have befallen my lady that had so affected her. But nothing I could then imagine seemed sufficient to work so great a change as this distracted letter showed, though indeed later it became clear to me. Then taking heart I wrote again, hoping that by some chance the letter might bring a little comfort:

“Beloved lady, do not grieve. The love of my spirit for your spirit is unchanged. It can never grow less, it can only grow more and more, as the flower unfolds in its beauty and perfection. Nothing earthly can blight it, since it is of the spirit, and, you remember, the spirit is placed above the heavens. Fear not for the future, nor fear anything from Leonardo’s love. I have never sought, and shall never seek to draw you to me, nor would I even take you were you swept to me by a sudden flood of passion. No, my beloved lady, I would not take you, unless you came to me freely, joyfully,

deliberately, even as a loving bride goes to her beloved spouse. And that—since you feel yourself bound to your Francesco, and since you love him as you do—is impossible. So rest assured, my beloved lady, in the perfection and unchangeableness of my love, which is of the spirit, and which demands nothing, but is content and blissful with whatever love and favor you can give with perfect freedom and without injuring or even troubling your heavenly soul.

“YOUR LEONARDO.”

Tommaso took the letter the next morning and returned with this reply:

“My beloved and wise Leonardo, it may be that you are right. It is my steadfast hope that you are right, and that the future will prove it; and that, mayhap, some day I may come to you as you desire,—‘freely, joyfully, deliberately, even as a loving bride goes to her beloved spouse.’ For I know that in no other way would you be content. You, who, being of the gods, love freedom above all things, could not love a slave—a slave of passion, even though it were a pas-

sion inspired by you. Can I, a poor, weak woman, become one of the gods like you? I know you think it possible. Oh! that you may be right. But, whatever may have befallen or may befall, be sure of this, that your Lisa loves you as much if not even more than you love

“YOUR LISA.

“Francesco came after I had written the above. He knew of your return to Florence, and laughingly said that nothing more could be expected of such a fickle man as you, who never was able to hold to one thing long enough to make good gain from it. I did not contradict him, for I know that the very limitlessness of my Leonardo’s mind makes it incomprehensible to other men. And, as he seemed content with his own idea, I let him think I agreed with him.

“I shall give this letter secretly to Tommaso, who loves you well; but do not write to me again until I send you word—probably by Salai. I cannot trust my own servants, and am not so sure of Salai now. But do not forget I love you. I love you with all my body, soul, and spirit—and I kiss your feet.”

XI

THE DAGGER

I WAITED anxiously for several days, but Salai did not appear. I imagined, therefore, that Messer Francesco was somewhat suspicious on account of my sudden departure, and that my lady, notwithstanding what he had said, feared to give him any cause of offence.

At length, one morning when I awoke, I found a letter lying on my pillow with my name written upon it in the hand of Salai and within it another from my lady. I read the latter first, and this was its content.

“To-morrow I go to Florence for I can no longer remain here. As soon as I am able to see you, I will send you word. Then, I pray you, come at once.”

The brevity of the letter and her not putting her own name or mine upon it, recalled to my mind what she had written concerning Salai. I then read his letter, which was as follows:

“Beloved Master, do not think me ungrateful because I go away without asking your permission or bidding you farewell. But I cannot bear to see you now, or to endure your searching eyes. Perhaps at some future time I may be able to return once more in the same spirit in which I have lived so long with you—your creature—grateful to you because you have made me what I am, and loving you because of your goodness and greatness. But now it is your very goodness and greatness that drive me away from you, since it is because of them you have won the heart and soul of the lady I worship. I know that she cares somewhat for me, but that is because I can sing your songs and can talk to her of you, and so bring you near to her. For, when we were together, she would talk of nothing else but you, and if I spoke of myself or of other things, her mind would wander and she was not content. I know what you have said about jealousy, I know that it is an insane passion; but still I have fallen a victim to that madness, and I can no longer endure to hear your name mentioned, especially by our lady, who loves you more than anyone

in the world. And yet she has favored me much—not on my account, but on yours—and therein lies the part of my suffering that is most cruel—to know that this does not belong to me, but to another—to you,—you, whom she loves so madly, that I fear she may not live unless she can soon behold you again. She is indeed very ill—a strange fever—and no one here knows what to do. So Messer Francesco will take her early tomorrow morning to Florence. She gave me the letter I have enclosed in this, and made me swear solemnly that I would deliver it to no one but you. And this I shall do, for I cannot disobey my lady. But I cannot bear to speak with you, or to have your searching eyes behold the secret of my heart, so when you read this I shall be on my way to my people in Milan. Yet, beloved Master, believe me, I have not forgotten one of the many benefits you have heaped upon me, and for which I have repaid you badly so often. I love you, and I love my lady, but I cannot endure to see you two again together. And therefore: *Addio*.

Your creature,

“ANDREA SALAI.”

With my heart filled with pity for the youth and yet consumed with anxiety for my lady, I waited in my house all day, hoping that some message might come from her; but I did not go out to meet her, because of her letter, which made me dread anything that mayhap might bring trouble to her.

Shortly before sunset Messer Francesco came, and, thinking that he might bear a message from my lady, I went to meet him with a joyful face, holding out my hand. But, he, refusing it with scorn, burst forth in anger, bestowing upon me every name of contempt and loathing possible. This I bore with patience, waiting to learn the cause of his rage; but when he went on to join my lady's name to mine, together with such blasphemy that I will not write, I sternly ordered him to cease. Then he sprang at me with his dagger; but I, grasping his hand, twisted the weapon from his clasp, and, breaking the blade thereof between my fingers, handed him the fragments and bade him go. So he departed.

XII

FRANCESCO'S STORY

AFTER Messer Francesco had been gone a little while, I girded on my sword and walked forth. I crossed the Piazza of Santa Maria, and, turning into the Via dell' Amore, I kept on my way past the house of the Giocondi to San Lorenzo, and so on by way of the Via dei Martelli to the Batisterio. Finding there some persons with whom I was acquainted, I spent a little time in conversation, and then, when darkness was falling, I departed homewards, again passing by the house where my lady lay. No one molested me either going or coming. Only—when I was in the Via dei Gigli I thought I heard rapid footsteps behind me, and, turning suddenly, was certain that I saw a man dart into a dark doorway. It may have been Messer Francesco, or someone sent to waylay me, and again, this man's movements may have had nothing to do with me.

When I reached my house I ordered the servants to admit no one without first coming to me; and after supper I tossed about on my bed, but could not sleep, because of thinking of my lady and of what might be her condition in this strange turn of affairs. I knew I could do nothing that night which might not be turned to her injury, but I resolved that on the morrow I would find some means of meeting Messer Francesco when the first transports of his rage should have subsided, and he would be able to listen to a rational statement of the matter, and could be made to see that his charges against my lady were without foundation. I did not meditate much upon this matter which only concerned me and Messer Francesco, because my mind was occupied with thoughts of my lady and of her sad state.

About midnight there was a loud knocking at my door, and Tommaso coming to me said that Messer Francesco was without, and wished to see me immediately. I thereupon asked if he had any people with him, and, upon Tommaso's replying that he was alone, I ordered him to be admitted.

When Messer Francesco entered he came

toward me, holding out his hand and saying in a humble tone:

“Master Leonardo, I come first to ask your forgiveness for the wrong I have done you, and this I am sure you will grant when you have heard fully what I have come to say.”

I pressed his hand warmly, for I saw that the man was oppressed by a heavy sorrow, and asked him to proceed.

“Master Leonardo,” he said, and as he went on his words were often interrupted by sobs and groans, “to-day I brought my wife to the city, for her sickness had increased greatly since your departure, and because we both believed she could have better care here than in the country. But, in spite of all I could do to make the journey easy, she was so overcome by fatigue that on entering the house she straightway fainted. As her women were unlacing her, a little packet of letters fell from her bosom, which I having picked up saw were in your hand and so hid them in my doublet. As soon as she was laid in her bed and the physician had arrived, I, driven by suspicion, retired to my room to examine them. I read the

first letter, from which, as you well know, I learned that you two loved and had kissed each other. I could read no further, but blinded with rage I straightway rushed hither, thinking of nothing but to slay you. When I departed from you, being defeated by your marvellous strength and magnanimity, I raged all the more, and hastening home, determined to charge Lisa with dishonoring me. I found her still unconscious, and the physician fearing that she would pass away. At last, late in the evening, when she recovered from her swoon, the first thing she did was to feel for her letters, and, finding they were gone, she turned to me and asked if I had them. In reply I told her briefly what I had done, smothering as well as I was able my rage which was still hot, and adding that I would not rest until I had compassed your death. With a sad smile she bade me read them all and then to return to her. This I did, and, Master Leonardo, you who wrote these letters know well that though they tell of the great love you bear my Lisa, and of the great love she has for you, yet there is nothing in them that could in any way dishonor the house of the

Giocondi, but that, on the contrary, these very letters are a faithful witness that you have protected my honor against your own self. And so, filled with shame and remorse, I returned to Lisa's bedside and craved forgiveness, which she, in the goodness of her heart, granted forthwith. Then I asked if there was anything I could do to make amends to her and to you for the wrong I had done. And she replied that first she wished me to give you your letters—behold! here they are!—and then that she desired above all things to see you again, and that we three should be once more united in friendship before she should pass away. And you will come, Master, for I fear she lies at the point of death. . . .”

XIII

THE BIRTH OF A SOUL

. . . WHEN Francesco had left us, my lady said to her nurse: "Go into the next room Maria, Master Leonardo will watch by me and will call you if there is need." And when we were alone she turned to me and said: "Leonardo, my beloved, come near to me and take my hand. Before Francesco returns with the priest I must make a confession to you, so that you also may forgive me and grant me absolution."

"It is not necessary, my lady," I replied, "There is nothing you can have done or that could have befallen you that is able to change my love. I love you, *carissima mia*, and shall ever love you. I can say no more."

"But still I must tell you, for I desire you to love me, knowing me all in all. I do not desire you to love a creature of your own imagination, but to love *me*—myself—just as I am—Lisa. And so listen, my beloved.

Even before the time I first saw you in Santa Maria I loved you for your works, for your fame. When I saw you standing by the church door you were to me a revelation—with your face like a god; and all that Salai told me concerning you made me love you more. And when I came to your studio the love grew stronger each day as I began to have more knowledge of you. But with all this ever growing love there was a fear—just as the old Zingara said—a fear of you because you are so great, a fear lest if you should come to know me as I knew your great open soul, you would think little of me and cast me aside.”

“Lisa,” I interrupted, “that is impossible.”

“I know it now—you are right—but I did not know it then. The fear was there, gnawing at my heart and often making me refrain from words that I was longing to utter. And out of this fear grew a desire, a desire to gain power over you,—you, the mighty Leonardo, and so hold you bound to me as I hold Francesco and could hold many others that I know. And there was within me a conflict—you recall the Cavern on Mon-

gibello, beloved,—on the one hand fear of what might befall and on the other an ever growing longing to throw myself into your arms and give myself all in all to you, regardless of whether I should find heaven or hell. Now, let me rest a little space, my beloved,—my strength is going, and I must tell you all.”

I pressed her hand and sat silent waiting, while my lady closed her eyes and rested, breathing quietly. Then, after a time, her eyes opened again, and looking at me steadfastly she continued: “You remember, my beloved, that night in this house when I came to you. Your calm self restraint at the last sitting had been to my longing as oil to fire. I knew that I could never conquer you, and that my highest glory would be to give myself to you. You remember how I came. As I bent toward you I thought you drew back, and a chill flood of fear overwhelmed me. Then—God be praised!—you, too, leaned toward me, and your lips met mine. That was the one perfect moment in my life. Now wait.—

“O my beloved,” she said after a space, “when I came up to our villa and knew you

were in Florence, I could not live without you after our long separation. I wanted you—just you—to be near me and to gladden me with the light of your eyes and the music of your voice. I had no fear; for was not Francesco there?—and you remember how happy I was. But when Francesco departed, once more the fear returned. You were so great and I so little. And that night—in the loggia—as the moon went down—I who had been so happy, sitting there beside you, holding your hand even as now, our spirits communing in the silence—I, the little, fearful Lisa, was seized with a sudden desire—the desire to know if you were a man like other men—the desire to sway you as I had swayed others—and—when I found that you were indeed a man—the only man who could move me to the innermost depths—for a moment—yes, for a moment—the bliss was so great that I cared not for God or Satan—only you—only you, my beloved. Then suddenly, in the midst of the ecstasy, the old fear seized me—and I fled—I, who had called you—yes, my beloved, you were right—I had called you—and I—I fled from heaven to hell—knowing only too well that

you alone could save me. When I called from the window, you, you did not hear—but Salai heard.—Now, wait a moment more—I must tell you what then befell—and yet, it is very hard—”

“My Lisa, my beloved, there is no need that you should tell me. I know what befell, and—”

“Has Salai told you?” she cried anxiously, half raising herself.

“No, my beloved,” I replied as I made her lie down again. “I have not seen him since that night. But from your letters—”

“You know it!—and you do not love me less? Leonardo!”

“I know it! And I should love you even more, if that were possible, my Lisa, since it was because of your love for me.”

A look of unutterable happiness dawned in her face as I bent over her and took both her hands in mine. For a time we looked into each other’s eyes and said no word. At length slowly and faintly but with a firm voice my lady spoke:

“Leonardo, my beloved, you are above all men. Now I can give myself to you in the manner you desire, freely, joyfully, delib-

erately, even as a loving bride goes to her beloved spouse. Take me, take me, Leonardo, my beloved spouse. Take me in your arms,—and kiss me.”

I lifted her in my arms,—and our lips met. And then I saw the woman soul.

“Let me rest in your arms, my beloved, until you hear them coming in the street. Then you may lay me down and call Maria. But now—let me rest on your breast—for at last I am at peace.”

XIV

THE PORTRAIT

. . . Soon after Fra Jacopo departed my lady closed her eyes in a quiet slumber. It was now daybreak, and I betook myself homewards, after telling Messer Francesco that I would not leave my house during the day.

As I entered the studio I beheld the portrait of my lady upon the easel, and, the image of her face in that last look appearing before me as if in reality, I took my brush and colors and set to work upon the picture. It seemed to me as if this were what she would have me do. And now at last what I had labored for so long began to appear under my brush. I worked steadily, without haste but with great sureness, throughout the day, and just before sunset I saw that I could do no more. The portrait was finished, as far as I or any mortal could carry it, but it was still unfinished, in

that it is impossible to portray the soul completely with material instruments directed by a mortal hand. I sat there gazing at my work, and in the fading light the face seemed to become alive; it smiled upon me as my lady did when she lay in my arms, and straightway a great peace filled my spirit. . . .

Not long after a messenger came from Messer Francesco to tell me that my lady was gone. She had not awakened from the peaceful slumber into which she had fallen at dawn, and had passed away about sunset, so quietly that no one knew the time of her departure. . . .

XV

CONCLUSION

. . . I COULD not remain in Florence. I had no heart to begin work again on the battle picture, and I could not endure to behold the places which had known my lady's presence and were now blank and empty. His Excellency, the Cardinal of Amboise, had long been desiring me to come to Milan, and, as the Signory could not afford to displease the French, through his intercession I obtained a leave of absence for three months on the 30th of May, 1506. As soon as I could put my affairs in order I left Florence and have never since returned there to dwell, though on several occasions I was forced to visit the city because of business,—notably the law suit, which my half brothers had instituted to deprive me of what my father had bequeathed me and also of a little inheritance received from my Uncle Francesco. I succeeded finally in upholding

my rights; but I have left the property to them in my will, and may they enjoy it.

I was also obliged to return to get together a sum of money, since the Gonfalonier had charged me with defrauding the treasury of Florence of money paid me for a picture I did not paint. But when I offered him the entire amount he refused to receive it. As for the picture itself I rejoice that I did not finish it, for when the Medici returned to power in 1513, and the poor Gonfalonier Soderini, had to flee for his life, they turned the Hall of the Grand Council into a barrack for their soldiery, who again hold Florence enslaved. And though Messer Giuliano dei Medici, who called himself my friend, caused a fence of boards to be placed before that part of the picture which was completed; yet he in his turn has passed away, and I know it will not be long before the picture, like my *Cavallo* in Milan will be destroyed. But whenever I was obliged to go to Florence I remained there as brief a space as possible, and never went into the quarters where I had been wont to see my lady. . . .

In Milan, Salai came to me, and I received

him with love, though he feared that I might turn him away; but that was not possible, since he had but lived his life to the best of the light that was given him, even as my lady had lived hers, and I live mine. Still, though I showed him much love, he was never what he was before, and he never mentioned the name of my lady. He assisted me much with my work and accompanied me to Rome when I went there with Il Magnifico Giuliano; but when I at last left Italy to come into France, he remained behind at Milan, having built himself a house in my vineyard that is without the gates, and the moiety of which I have bequeathed to him in my will. His place was taken by my beloved Francesco di Melzi, who did much to cheer me by his beauty and gayety when I first came to Milan from Florence in 1506, and who is now with me and will remain with me in love to the end.

Before I left Italy, I learned that Messer Francesco, who had consoled himself by marrying again, had sold the portrait of my lady. I therefore purchased it, but the new owner, who truly had some idea of its value, made me pay the sum of four thousand gold

crowns. This sum was advanced to me by the most Christian King, and the picture is to pass into his hands, for only a great king is worthy to possess the portrait of my lady, when I shall pass away. . . .

And so I learned through my lady what a woman soul might be. Instead of truth and justice which is the goal of man's *virtù*, woman's end is love—love *with* truth and justice if that be possible, but love transcending truth and justice if it be not. And indeed it seems to me a good thing that it is so, for a world ruled only by clear truth and stern justice would be but a sorry place and impossible to be dwelt in by most human beings. Love is the creator, the enfolder, the developer, the cherisher of all the beauty and tenderness and sweetness of life, and is the *virtù* that transcends all others and that saves the world. This was seen by our Lord Christ, who said . . . In the struggle for perfection the woman should strive to attain the manly *virtù* of truth and justice, and the man should strive to attain the woman's *virtù* of love. Therefore, before my right hand failed me, I put into color my cartoon of the Madonna and Saint Anne,

and also painted the little picture of Saint John the Baptist, a man—yet with all the woman soul within him—pointing upward to the new light which is to come. But no man who has seen this last picture can understand it, and I know that most men will fail to grasp its full meaning; for most men are like monkeys, who, when they receive a new thing, can make nothing of it unless they can put it to their noses, in order to smell it and discover if it is good to eat. It is my belief, however, that in the future, men will arise, and women also, who will understand the message of this picture of the Baptist.

.

I have made my peace with the Holy Church, and when I die shall pass away like my lady with the ministrations of her priests; for I now see that the Church, with all her errors, all her superstitions, all her corruption and debauchery in high places, all her trickery and her deceiving of the poor and ignorant, is the one power in this world which upholds and spreads the law of love—the law which our Lord Christ taught, and his holy apostles preached—the law which filled

the heart of my lady and gave her peace when her spirit passed above the heavens.

And I, being filled with this new faith, which is not like the blind faith of my childhood, but is founded on my fullest, truest knowledge, the knowledge of life, I am beginning to cherish the hope that when my spirit shall abandon this body, its creature and instrument, it shall meet again the spirit of my lady somewhere, somehow,—and then, that my soul shall know her soul in very truth and love, since all earthly impediment shall have been transcended. *Vale.*



A 000 110 151

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388

Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

NON-RENEWABLE

ILL~JRY
JAN 27 REC'D

DUE 2 WKS FROM DATE RECEIVED

UCLA ACCESS SERVICES BL19

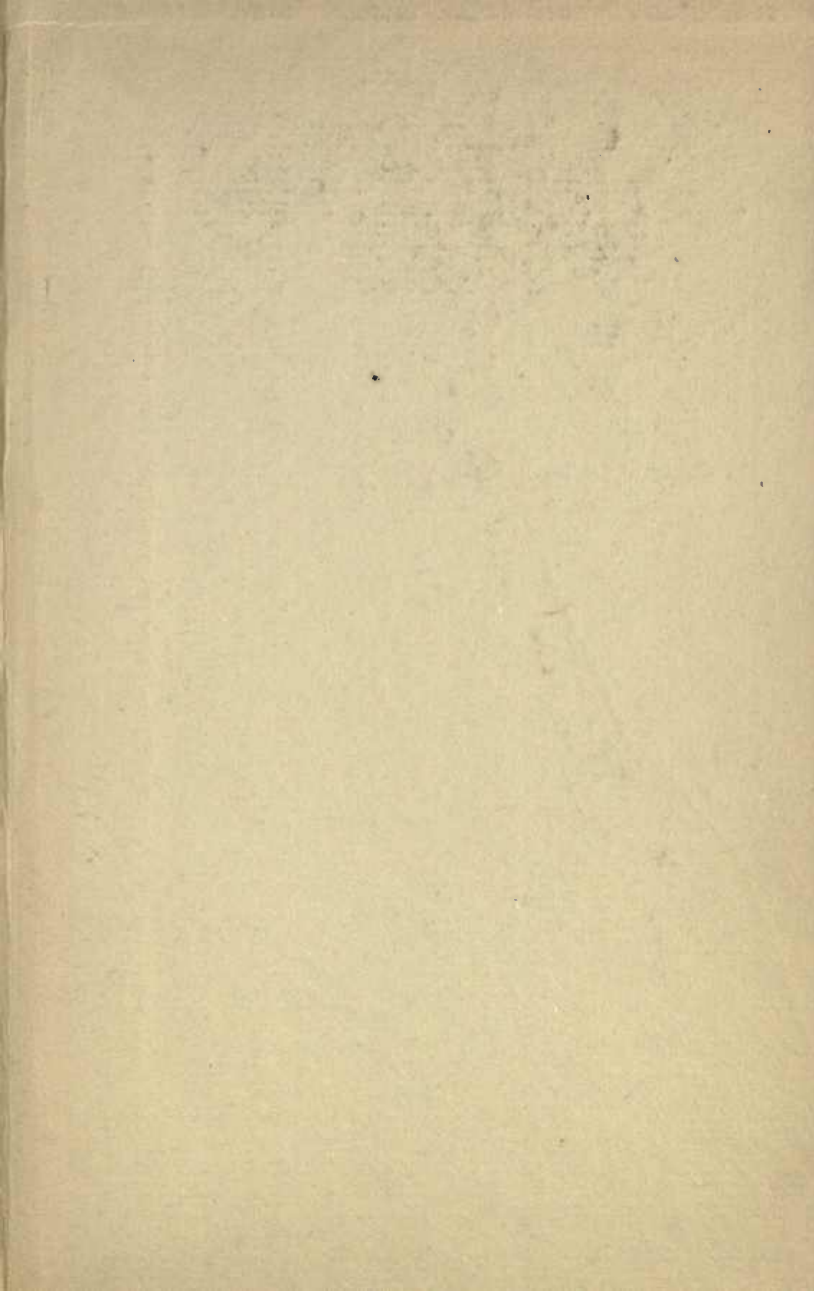
Interlibrary Loans

1630 University Research Library

Box 951575

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1575

FEB 13 '00



University
Southe
Libran